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HEROES HONORED

Jen Jones
VALLEY PATRIOT CONTRIBUTOR

The Methuen Exchange Club hosted their 20th Annual Awards Night on November 18th at the Merrimack Valley Golf Club. This is a special event all around as the club presents awards to a few very special people who have displayed incredible acts throughout the community. The awards presented consisted of: Firefighter of the Year, Police Officer of the Year, So Proudly We Hail for both a resident and a business, as well as the highest honor presented by the National Exchange Club, The Book of Golden Deeds.

This year The Exchange Club was privileged to honor two Firefighters, and a Police Officer whose quick thinking, and actions assisted in saving a woman's life. One evening, all three award recipients responded to the same emergency call at the Texas Roadhouse for a woman who was choking on her meal. The responders were able to loosen the object from obstruct-

HEROES: PAGE 20

Methuen Police Officer Joe Rynne
Exchange Club Police Officer of the Year

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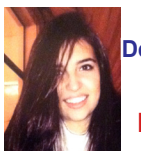

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Notes from the American Legion by John Lenotte

As the Christmas and New Year's holidays approach us, let us not forget the men and women in our military, most of who will not be with their families this season. This is a sacrifice that most cannot imagine unless they have been through it. Ask what you can do to help them and their families, some of whom may be in need at this time of year. This year, the American Legion is partnering with the Oak Ridge Boys who will perform a Christmas Special, which is also a fundraiser to help veterans. For additional information, check out this website: http://www.legion.org/media/225266/schedule-set-oak-ridge-boys-christmas-special

And now that the elections are behind us, Congress will be back in session for a short time and then back to work with new members and leaders in January. I have recently come across some information that I will share with all of you. This is from US Senator Tom Coburn, Republican from Oklahoma. I will admit to being a long standing Democrat. But this Senator has some interesting information that he shares about government waste. I am going to mention just a few items from his one hundred plus page document which can be found at http://www.coburn.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ContentRecord_id=f9478504-be7e-4b8f-9ef8-baa0895a9579

Senator Coburn points to $25 billion in wasted money by the government,your tax dollars and mine. Here are a few examples: In 2014, eleven federal agencies spent over $50 million paying government employees on administrative leave, one-third of which was for disciplinary reasons. The National Institutes of Health provided $387 thousand for a two year project to study how rabbits reacted to a simulated Swedish massage. The US Army created a free online shooter game back in 2002. As of 2009, the amount spent came to at least $33 million although originally budgeted for $7 million. The National Science Foundation paid $560 thousand to run shrimp on a tiny treadmill. Another study funded a grant worth $856 thousand to teach three captive mountain lions to use a treadmill. You may have heard about the issues with private companies doing government background checks. One company was paid $124.3 million to conduct security clearance background checks. This past January, this same company was accused by the US Department of Justice of submitting 665 thousand fake investigations. State and local governments have subsidized the building of sports stadiums to the tune of $146 million. Another National Institutes of Health grant for $371 thousand studied if mothers love dogs as much as their children. The US Coast Guard provides patrols to prevent uninvited guests to private parties. This is said to cost over $100 thousand. How about three government agencies support of the testing of a synchronized swim team of sea monkeys for a cost of over $307 thousand. The US State Department has a program to promote US culture around the world to the tune of $90 million each year. This has included public concerts, workshops, lectures and even a nose flutist. And even better, government officials traveled around the country at taxpayer expense to judge live auditions in New York City, St. Louis and San Francisco. How about golf club testing on the International Space Station? NASA has spent $3 billion on this facility. Yes, there are some good benefits. But testing golf clubs, examining if tadpole shrimp can be grown in microgravity? The last item I will mention is a $350 million rocket testing tower completed this year in Mississippi. It has no purpose and along with thirty-three other facilities that NASA has little or no future need will cost $43 million a year to maintain. This and MANY more are documented in the report.

And there are many state and local projects that we could all point to. Does your city or town have a building maintenance plan? It seems easier to just let the property fall apart and then either build a new one, or spend incredible amounts of money for repairs that could have cost much less if dealt with early on. If the roof in your home leaks, do you get it fixed right away, or wait until you have to replace the entire roof?

Does all of this make you frustrated? Angry? If so, you need to contact your elected officials and let them know. We vote them into office. They should be addressing our concerns. But they don't know what those concerns are unless we let them know.

May God Bless our troops and their families this holiday season.

John Lenotte is the American Legion, Commander, Wilbur M. Comeau Post 4 Haverhill and Vice Commander, Dept. of Massachusetts. He is also the recipient of The Valley Patriot Hero Award. You can Email him at JohnLDistrict8@verizon.net

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Our Newly-Elected Congress Needs to Re-Discover America's Basic Principles – Part II

Dr. Charles Ormsby
VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

Last month, in Part I, I outlined the core principles of Conservatism:

• A dedication to individual liberty and the primacy of the individual,

• A government dedicated to the rule of law (starting but not ending with strict interpretation of our Constitution based on the original intent of the Founders),

• A no-compromise stance in defense of our most fundamental rights with particular focus on our First and Second Amendment rights, and

• An insistence that government violations of our property rights be substantially reduced through a radical reform of our tax laws and a dramatic reduction in the government's regulatory infringements of those rights.

I then discussed, in some depth, the first item. Part I concluded by noting that a Conservative's belief in individual liberty must have substance. Specifically, you can't claim to believe in individual liberty while supporting policies that let the government run roughshod over people's rights.

Therefore, a necessary condition, if our rights are to be secure, is that we live in a society based on the rule of law. First and foremost, in America, this means respecting the Constitution.

Conservatives, therefore, MUST insist that judges appointed to the Supreme Court be dedicated to upholding a strict interpretation of our Constitution as intended by our Founding Fathers.

While respect for previous decisions of the Supreme Court (stare decisis – to "stand by that which is decided") is a good practice when previous decisions comport with the original intent of the Founders, decisions that directly contradict this intent should be overturned without any reservation.

Initially, our Constitution's function was restricted to granting a set of limited powers to our new federal government. It was implicitly understood that any powers not specifically granted were retained by the states or the people.

The historically justified fear that government would exceed its legitimate authority led to the insistence that our most precious rights be explicitly spelled out. The Bill of Rights lists these critical rights (the first eight amendments), establishes the fact that this list is not exhaustive (the Ninth Amendment), and ensures that powers not specifically delegated to the federal government are reserved to the states and the people (the Tenth Amendment).

Maintaining these rights for ourselves and future generations is fundamental to the preservation of liberty. Therefore:

Conservatives must vigorously protect our rights with special attention to those outlined in the Bill of Rights and not let them be diminished or eroded at any cost.

Our First and Second Amendment rights deserve focused attention because they represent our two most important civil rights: the right to express ideas (alone and with the voluntary participation of others) and the right to defend ourselves. Only by guaranteeing open intellectual debate and the sharing of ideas through free speech can our rights be secured and the need for violent confrontation avoided. These rights should be considered sacrosanct and never be abridged for any reason – certainly not for anything as silly as "campaign finance reform."

The Second Amendment represents our right to defend our liberties when our government fails to protect them. Only by reserving to individuals the right to use force to defend themselves and their families can individuals be assured that those rights are truly protected.

Having a right to life when the police find you murdered hardly constitutes a right.

Speaking of a right to life, your life cannot be secure without the right to property. Property rights are a logical consequence of any claim to a right to life. If you have no right to property, your means of sustaining your life can be taken from you. If you can't gather and utilize the necessities of life, you can be deprived of the right to life.

Thus, Conservatives must be ardent supporters of property rights.

A right to property is the right to determine how that property is to be used, the right to any proceeds derived from that property, and the right to trade that property or its proceeds with others, based on mutual consent without interference.

Individuals earn the right to property through trade with others; either trading labor or intellectual property, or by exchanging other property or rights. Having the right to property means that neither the government nor another individual can be permitted to take away your property by force or impose restrictions, with the exception of outlawing fraud, on your exchange of that property.

If strictly observed, individual property rights would prohibit all taxation and the taking of property by eminent domain. While I would welcome this conclusion, such a strict prohibition might leave me in a political movement of a few thousand people and not the millions needed to be successful. While the risks of philosophical compromise are substantial, under the present circumstances some relaxation of this principle is necessary.

The more practical test for Conservatives is to ensure that there is agreement on the direction of new policy initiatives. The common goal should be crystal clear: everything possible must be done to substantially reduce the infringement of our property rights by government.

First and foremost, this means a dramatic reduction in the taking of private property through taxation. In the process of implementing tax reductions, there will be many alternatives to choose from. In every case, the options should be chosen that minimize infringements of individual liberties.

This goal cannot be accomplished by tweaking the current tax code. Proposed reforms must involve total elimination of the current tax system and its replacement with a revenue generating mechanism that is substantially simpler and less intrusive. Obvious candidates are the flat tax or the national sales tax that would replace the federal income tax – including abolishing the income tax amendment to the Constitution.

Note that current flat tax and sales tax proposals are designed to be revenue neutral. This constraint must be vehemently rejected. Not to do so is to ratify the destruction of liberty championed by liberal politicians over the last 100 years. Instead, the goal of Conservatives must be to substantially reduce the government's taking of private property.

Unfortunately, this leaves room for both good ideas and bad ideas. But, if "substantially reduce" is taken seriously (e.g., cut in half or more), even bad ideas would be far better than the current state of affairs.

To sum up, these are the core beliefs that truly define Conservatives and the Conservative movement. They are as important and relevant today as they were 200 years ago when some brilliant individuals gathered together to form a new nation based on individual liberty and the rule of law.

Now that Republicans have re-gained control of Congress, It is time to put these principles to work

No more excuses!

Dr. Charles Ormsby served two terms on the North Andover School Committee, co-founded the North Andover Taxpayers Association, is a a co-founder of and columnist for The Valley Patriot, broadcasts weekly opinion pieces for WCAP (980 AM) in Lowell, and is a faculty member in the Department of Mathematical Sciences at the University of Massachusetts Lowell. Dr. Ormsby is a graduate of Cornell and has a doctorate degree from MIT. You can email him at ccormsby@verizon.net

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Anti-Police Hysteria, Media Lies: The Lesson of Ferguson

Ferguson Police Officer Darren Wilson fought off his would-be killer Michael Brown, who attacked him in his cruiser, tried to shoot Wilson with his own gun, and eventually was killed when charging at the officer. That is what the science says.

Forensic evidence shows Michael Brown's blood was inside the front seat of Officer Wilson's cruiser and on his uniform.

Bullet holes were found inside the driver's side door. Autopsies by not only MO County examiners, but also Eric Holder's Dept. of Justice, show that Michael Brown was shot in the thumb with gun powder embedded in his hand, proving Brown was holding the gun when it went off.

Science, and forensic evidence also shows that Brown was charging forward at the officer when he fired the fatal shot to Brown's head.

Given these scientific facts, the grand jury in Ferguson voted not to charge Officer Wilson and that he killed Michel Brown in self-defense. Unfortunately, the facts didn't seem to matter by the time this decision was reached. Those who exploit racial division had already promoted the fake news narrative of a wild, racist, white cop gunning for any black man he could kill (with a "news" media all too eager to whip up racial hatred for ratings).

There are two types of people when such stories are hyped by the "news" media:

The first, are those who make up their minds long before any evidence, science, or forensics are established. They want to believe one side because it fits their world view. In this case: "white cop" equals bad ... while "young black criminal" equals good.

The other type of person waits for evidence, facts, and science before making up their minds, because they are not interested in promoting a narrative, but seeking the truth based on ... just the facts, ma'am.

Being in the second category, we are horrified by the lies and propaganda of those who rest in the first.

CNN, Al Jazeera America, MSNBC, CBS, NBC, ABC and almost every other news channel stoked the flame of hatred, hyping the fact that Brown was "an unarmed black teen" to psychologically manipulate the public into believing Officer Wilson committed murder.

They also hyped the accusations of racism, despite the fact that not one shred of evidence has been produced to show racial bias, hatred, or prejudice on the part of Officer Wilson.

With millions of news reporters obsessed with vilifying Wilson, you might think that they'd have dug up even one Facebook posting, tweet, former girlfriend, fellow officer, or even childhood friend alleging or showing Wilson had hatred or prejudice for black people.

To this minute that has not happened.

The fact is, those who marched, protested, rioted and looted in memory of their hero and would be cop-killer, Michael Brown, can promote all the lies and distortions they want, but their actions are clear.

Supporting Michael Brown in the wake of real science, evidence, and a Dept. of Justice autopsy, shows that they support violent, black criminals having the "right" to attack police officers in their cars, shoot them with their own guns, and do so with impunity because of paranoid delusions of mass persecution by white America. Delusions that were promoted and propagandized by the news media, Hollywood, and the White House.

We support Officer Darren Wilson in the wake of the science and the evidence. Those who don't are clearly science-deniers who hate white people, hate cops, and worst of all hate science and the truth ... especially when that truth flies in the face of what they wanted to happen, instead of what did happen.

The Truth About The Ferguson Shooting

Jeff Katz

VOTED AP's BEST RADIO TALK SHOW HOST
VALLEY PATRIOT EDITOR'S CHOICE AWARD

There are quite literally thousands of interactions between citizens and law enforcement officers every single day in the United States. Unless you are the cop or the suspect in one of these situations, you're not aware of them. Why? Because almost all of these incidences involve issues which are not particularly noteworthy.

The incident in Ferguson, MO should have been among the thousands of cases we know nothing about. An eighteen year old man being asked to get out of the street is hardly a headline grabber. Even the arrest of an eighteen year old man for stealing some cheap cigars would usually not get any attention. Heck, a fight between a police officer and an eighteen year old man is not particularly newsworthy. So, why do all of us now know the names Michael Brown and Darren Wilson?

We know about Michael Brown because a carefully crafted life story has been created by those who are looking to exploit his memory. If the professional race hustlers told the truth about Michael Brown, well, they'd have nothing to peddle. See, an eighteen year old man who stands six feet six inches tall and weighs close to three hundred pounds is hardly a doe eyed babe in the woods. So the first thing they did was to make sure that only photos of him from his childhood would be available, kind of like the tactic they took when exploiting the Trayvon Martin case.

After casting Michael Brown as a helpless little boy, the con men in clerical collars made sure that Brown's strong arm robbery was ignored and the entire "hands up – don't shoot" meme was created. Make no mistake, "hands up – don't shoot" is a great angle but it is also purely fictional. We've seen multiple times in this case that facts simply do not matter. And as usual useful idiots be they college students, Congressmen or Saint Louis Ram players were willing to play along.

Darren Wilson was the beat cop who had the misfortune to encounter Michael Brown on that August evening. Wilson was a well respected member of the Ferguson Police Department who made a simple request of Brown; please get out of the street. Nothing more, nothing less. The tragic decisions that night were all made by Brown. It was Brown who made the choice not to comply with Wilson's lawful request. It was Brown who charged the cop and it was Brown who turned a simple thing in to a life and death matter.

Protesters, cops, civilians and talking heads of all stripes can all agree that Michael Brown did not need to die that night. We should all be aware of who was really in control of this situation and it was not Darren Wilson. If only Michael Brown had conducted himself properly he'd be here now. He didn't so he's not.

Jeff Katz is a former police officer, former talk show host on Talk1200AM and won the Associated Press Award for Best Talk Show in Boston two years in a row. He is now an exclusive columnist for The Valley Patriot. He is the recipient of The Valley Patriot's 2013 Editor's Choice Award for exceptional writing about issues that effect our lives. WEBSITE: visionaccomplished.net

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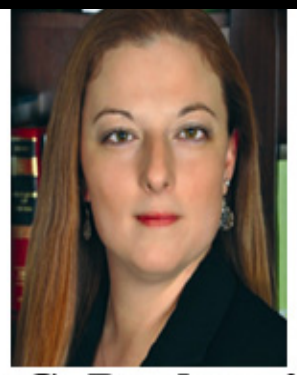

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Andover Youth Services

Anne Knowles
VALLEY PATRIOT ANDOVER COLUMNIST

Although it has been twenty years in development, Andover will soon have the Cormier Youth Center ready for Andover Youth Services program. It is one of the most outstanding of the town's activities in importance and diversity. Begun as an inspired idea by Director Bill Fahey, and supported by the citizens and town administrators since 1994, Andover Youth Services is a mainstay in the community. The AYS reaches over 7000 young people annually, with many of them still involved in the goals and activities of the AYS long after high school. "Once part of the circle, always a part of the circle" explained Neal Callahan, Program Director and 2007 graduate of Andover High School.

The Andover Youth Services offer many varied activities for young people from 6th grade through high school. The program is staffed by program coordinators who encourage the students in developing ideas, sport activities, and volunteers for community service programs. Glenn Wilson, Assistant Director, and Tony Lombardi, Program Coordinator, have been instrumental in bringing an outstanding program for growth and development to the many youngsters who take part in the AYS. A visit to the website Andoveryouthservices.com is recommended to see just how vital and important this organization is to the Town of Andover.

Visiting the current headquarters of the AYS on Pearson St. in Andover Center is to be impressed by the vitality and dynamic atmosphere of the people who provide so much to the organization. Kyle Lightner, one of the youth coordinators is getting ready for the move to the new center so that even more activities can be developed. Andover can be well pleased with the students and staff of the AYS.

The new Center, currently under construction, will have facilities for even more activities. Larger space, including a gym, and a media center for fine and performing arts, will allow continued growth and enrichment for the participants of the AYS. It will be "a place where our young people can foster new ideas and take ownership of their success from start to finish".

Much of the support for the activities of AYS, come from fundraising by the AYS participants. This Christmas season, the Christmas tree sale, A LOT OF TREES, will begin, with freshly cut trees from New Brunswick. The trees are harvested by youth volunteers from AYS, who travel to Canada and spend long, tedious hours working to get the trees ready for the Annual Christmas tree sale. A LOT OF TREES is located at 80 Shawsheen Rd., near West Middle School. Hours are as follows: Monday through Friday from 3-8:30pm and Saturday and Sunday from 9am to 9pm.

Christmas wreaths, both plain and decorated, kissing balls, rope for garlands, and centerpieces will also be available for sale. An added bonus is that the AYS is always ready to help "get the Christmas trees secured" on your vehicle.

Both the AYS members and staff, the citizens of Andover, town officials and local businesses can take great pride in this outstanding program, that began with an idea and kept growing with the dedication of hundreds of people, both young and old, who recognized a "good thing" when they saw it and supported it with a vision and money for many years.

ANDOVER HISTORY

Memorial Hall Library of Andover is promoting "Preserving Andover History Month" for December, 2014. The Genealogy Club meets at the library the 2nd Thursday of each month from 10-11am. The club is looking for pre-1970 photographs of people, buildings and interesting events that have been a part of the history of Andover. The photos can be brought to the library and be digitalized. Registration can be made by contacting Kim Lynn at 978-623-8401 x36 or online at klynn@mhl.org. Twenty spaces are available for this project.

The MHL has several research sites available online including a listing of National Registration of Historic Properties, Historical Styles of Andover Homes, Ballardville Historic District, Research History of Houses and the Historic Building Marker Program.

It can be very interesting to see the buildings and homes in Andover that span several generations.

A great feature of the Club is the research available for you to check your family tree. Many sites are online through the library's computer programs. Many historic documents can be found online. As always, the MHL is a researcher's treasure.

Robbing Peter to Pay Paul: the Lawrence RMV Move

Oscar Camargo
VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

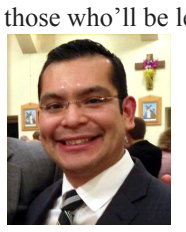
Whether you like it or not, the Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV) in South Lawrence is moving. The lifeblood of one community will be diverted to another with the hope that it'll be revitalized. The goal, as envisioned by Lawrence Mayor Dan Rivera, is to promote economic development in the business district concentrated along Essex Street and Broadway.

Despite the pleas from residents and business owners, the message is clear: Take your medicine. It's a bit of tough love that, if successful, will transform the area for the better. But the fear from many is that Lawrence is simply robbing Peter to pay Paul.

Can you blame them?

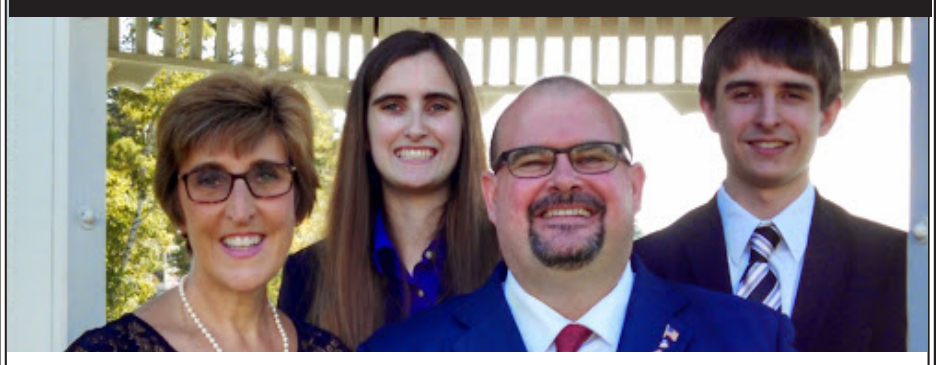
Leaders are able to articulate a vision for the future, make compelling arguments, and are inclusive. The Mayor and the state's Department of Transportation have done a decent job explaining the benefits of moving the RMV, but they've failed to explain how South Lawrence will survive after the move. Why else would five thousand people sign a petition in protest of the move if they didn't feel included in the process?

These concerns are real and you'd be remiss if you ignored them. The fear in South Lawrence is that there isn't a viable post-RMV plan. If there is, then it hasn't been articulated as well as the move. In the end, we're left with one portion of Lawrence hopeful for the future and another worried about its prospects. Moving forward, this vision ought to account for those who'll be left behind.



Oscar Camargo can be reached at followcamargo@gmail.com or follow him on Twitter at @followcamargo.

HAVE YOU CREATED A PLAN TO PROTECT YOUR FAMILY IN THE EVENT YOU ARE NO LONGER HERE?



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Activities, Announcements North Andover Senior Center

Volunteers are the backbone of the North Andover Senior Center, we currently need Medical Transport Volunteers. You can set your own hours. Call the Senior Center for more information. Speak with our Program Coordinator at 688-9560 for application and assistance.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

SENIOR CENTER CLOSES December 24th at noon and will be closed on the 25th for the Holidays! We are open Friday, December 26th. Closed again for New Years on Thursday, January 1st. We are open Friday, January 2nd.

THE ANDREWS SISTERS OF SWING: Wide Eyes Theatre Company, Inc. performing here at the NA Senior Center Tuesday, December 16th 3-5 p.m. Tickets $4 Limited to 100 seniors.

ANNUAL MEMORIAL SERVICE: Beacon Hospice hosts our annual Memorial Service to remember your loved ones. Wednesday, December 10th 1:30-2:30pm at the NA Council on Aging. RSVP to Lou Bonanno, Bereavement Coordinator at (978) 837-3333.

NA MIDDLE SCHOOL HOLIDAY BAND PERFORMANCE : At the North Andover Senior Center on December 17th @ 12:30pm.

CONTINUING IN DECEMBER (Last Fresh Table Until March): Dec. 17th WEDNESDAY'S "FRESH TABLE" at the North Andover Senior Center at noon. The congregate meal will not be served on Wednesdays. Fresh meal will be prepared in-house. Cost $5, reservation with reception must be made the Friday before. Limited to 24. Check with reception for menu. No refunds or take out.

LECTURE SERIES: Mondays @10am. December 15 – Rabbi, December 22 – TBD, December 29 – Campus Ministry Merrimack College.

ONE ON ONE COMPUTER INSTRUCTION: 45 minute sessions for $7. Tuesdays 9-12 with George Chory, Thursdays 9-12 with Tom Kooken. Make your appointments with reception 978-688-9560. This time can accommodate gadgets, too if necessary (Phones, Tablets, etc.).

NEWS & VIEWS: Every Wednesday at 10–11:30am. Come and join in the lively discussion of current events, politics, history and you never know what else?!

MEET WITH AN ATTORNEY: Atty. Ray Cannon, Dec 3rd and Atty. Ramsey Bahrawy, Dec. 17th. Schedule with Reception- first consult is free.

MR. FIX IT: First and Third THURSDAY of the month from 12-3pm. December dates Dec 11th and Dec 18th. We repair almost as good as new. Lamps, with cords and sockets, replace watch batteries, small tables and chairs. Anything that is not listed, we will give it a shot! Your cost is $2 - $4 depending on work needed, plus parts. Proceeds benefit the Senior Center.

WALK IN CLINIC: Wednesdays 9am-12pm, the North Andover Senior Center and Home Health Inc/VNA operate a wellness clinic. No clinic Dec 24th. If you are a North Andover Senior, we urge you to take advantage of this opportunity to check your blood pressure, blood sugar, weight and blood oxygen levels. Consult privately with an RN regarding any medication and health issues that you are concerned about. There is no charge for this service. Donations are gratefully accepted.

FOOT CARE: RN Catherine Languedoc, Foot Care Specialist ($25), third Friday of every month from 8:30-2:30. Dr. Skinner ($30) is available on the second Wednesday of the month, 1-4pm.

ROCKINGHAM MALL TRIP: 4th Monday of every month. Exception for Dec, the trip is December 15th, $5 Round Trip.

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Election Coordinator Rafael Tejeda Fired After Scathing Report

Tom Duggan
VALLEY PATRIOT PUBLISHER

Lawrence Mayor Dan Rivera has fired Rafael Tejeda, (the Lawrence Bilingual Elections Coordinator) after a review of the Lawrence election process by election attorneys of Kopelman and Paige.

The municipal law firm released a scathing review of Lawrence's handling of the election process after reviewing the 2014 elections.

Rivera said he let Tejeda go "so we can go in a different direction" adding that Tejeda was an "at will employee".

An attorney for Kopelman and Paige was in Lawrence on Election Day and inspected the election locations, observing the election process and overseeing the ballot casting and counting process. The attorney also reviewed documents and training procedures prior to the election, criticizing Lawrence's lack of organization and adequate education of election workers.

Rivera said that he may also be taking action to remove Tejeda's boss, City Clerk William Maloney as well.

Rivera would have to submit City Clerk Maloney's name to the Lawrence City Council with a recommendation that they uphold his firing. Rivera would need a 2/3 vote of the council to affirm Maloney's firing.

Lawrence Mayor Rivera has long criticized Maloney and Tejeda's handling of the Election Department going back to Rivera's early days as a city councilor.

The Kopelman and Paige review lists a myriad of election violations and procedures not being followed, painting a picture of an election department in chaos.

Under the Lawrence City Charter, the city's Election Department comes under the authority of the City Clerk who is hired by the city council. The Bilingual Elections Coordinator (Tejeda) works directly under Maloney.

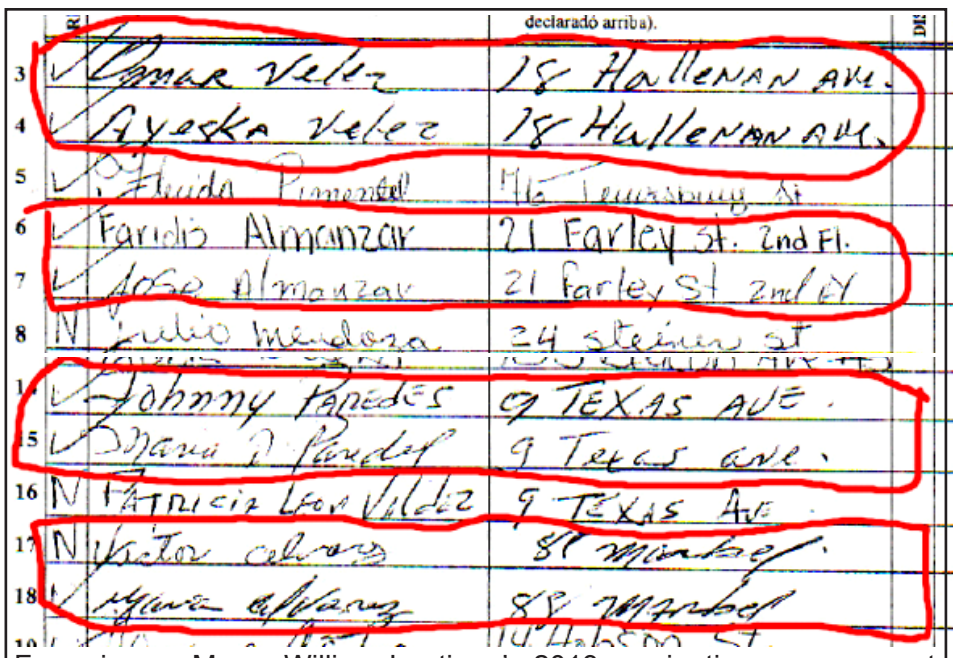
TEJEDA'S HISTORY OF SHENANIGANS

As Bilingual Election Coordinator, Tejeda was an outspoken supporter of former Lawrence Mayor William Lantigua and openly worked on Lantigua's political campaigns while working in the Lawrence Election Department.

Tejeda is no stranger to election shenanigans, he was caught allowing fraudulent signatures in an election between Willie Lantigua ally, State Rep. Frank Moran, and newcomer Kevin Cuff.

Election officials at Secretary of State Bill Galvin's office did nothing about the obvious fraud found on (now) State Rep. Frank Moran's nomination papers in 2012. Galvin and Lantigua have long been allies since Lantigua's days in the State Legislature.

Tejeda also admitted he forged signatures on Mayor William Lantigua's nomination papers in 2013, then certifying his own forgeries as authentic. Tejeda was never prosecuted by Secretary of State Bill Galvin's office, despite the fact that Tejeda has had a history of election misdeeds.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3 Omar Velez 18 Hallenan Ave.
4 Ayeska Velez 18 Hallenan Ave.
5 Alvida Pimentel 116 Lawrence St
6 Faridis Almanzar 21 Farley St. 2nd Fl.
7 Jose Almanzar 21 Farley St 2nd FL
8 N Julio Mendoza 24 steiner st
14 Johnny Paredes 9 TEXAS AVE.
15 Maria D Paredes 9 Texas ave.
16 N PATRICIA LEON VELEZ 9 TEXAS AVE
17 N Victor Cabrera 81 Monroe
18 Maria Alvarez 88 Monroe
Forgeries on Mayor William Lantigua's 2013 nomination papers, most of which were certified as valid by Rafael Tejeda, Election Coordinator.

Tejeda was also involved in the scandal surrounding two recall petitions against Mayor Lantigua, where signatures of voters were deemed forgeries and not counted despite the fact that those voters appeared before the election commission attesting that the signatures were theirs.

According to the election review of Tejeda and Maloney; "Covers were placed on [ballot] boxes, and seals were affixed, but access could still be gained to boxes without removing the covers," and in one precinct, ballots from broken machines were taken out of those machines and turned over to Lawrence Police officers for "safe keeping".

REVIEW CRITICAL OF MALONEY

The report was also critical of Lawrence City Clerk William Maloney for not being present when the ballots arrived at City Hall on election night, not giving proper training to election workers, not following proper procedures in ballot counting, allowing untrained poll workers to assist voters, untrained poll workers and others having access to ballots, and improper handling of absentee and provisional ballots.

Mayor Dan Rivera promised on his first day in office back in January of 2014 that he was going to remove City Clerk Maloney.

LAWRENCE ELECTION DEPARTMENT IN CHAOS

The report by Kopelman and Paige specifically cited City Clerk William Maloney and/or Rafael Tejeda's role in being responsible for:

* Lack of poll worker training
* Ballot machine breakdowns
* Lack of adequate poll signage
* Lack of adequate chain of custody for ballots
* Election worker entering the ballot booth with a voter to "translate" a ballot
* Overstuffed boxes
* Lack of accountability for payroll of election workers
* Lack of ballot box security
* Material being stored inside boxes that were not secured
* Allowing the public access to the vault where ballots were being held on election night
* Absentee ballots sent to wrong polling places
* Absentee ballots not counted on election night
* Failure to have a staffing plan for the polls
* Lack of information as to who was and was not working the polls on election day.

Former NH Rep., Atty. DiFruscia Caught Red Handed Stealing Valley Patriot Newspapers.... Again.

For the past two years, The Valley Patriot has been investigating a series of thefts of newspapers and newspaper boxes throughout the Merrimack Valley totaling an estimated loss of more than $2,200 just this year alone in stolen papers in Methuen, Lawrence and Salem NH.

Last month, former Windham State Representative, Attorney Anthony DiFruscia was caught red handed at the North End Deli on Common Street removing Valley Patriot newspapers from the rack and throwing them in the trash.

Greg Fratto of North End Deli, who also advertises in The Valley Patriot (see their ad on page 17) says he confronted DiFruscia when he saw the former State Representative come into his store, pick up a stack of about 30 newspaper and throw the papers in the trash.

"I confronted him," Fratto says. "I asked him why he was throwing away the papers since they didn't belong to him. He said 'I hate that paper, I throw them out everywhere I go.' I told him I advertise in that newspaper and this is my store, you don't come in here and start stealing things that don't belong to you. I couldn't believe what I was hearing."

Fratto says the store has video of DiFruscia throwing the papers away and that his workers had caught DiFruscia on at least two previous occasions stealing Valley Patriot newspapers.

DiFruscia was also caught on camera last summer at Methuen Family Restaurant, just moments after the box was filled with 55 newspapers.

A member of DiFruscia's family contacted The Valley Patriot in response to a Facebook posting on the matter, apologizing for DiFruscia's behavior and offering to pay for the cost of the papers DiFruscia had stolen, if no police report was filed.

"I let it go because DiFruscia's family seemed to be really affected by DiFruscia's criminal behavior and didn't want a story in the paper, so I told them that if they could assure it would never happen again, I would drop the whole matter," said Tom Duggan, publisher and owner of The Valley Patriot.

"We let it go at Heav'nly Donuts, we let it go when he stole papers at Methuen Family Restaurant, we even looked the other way when we found out he was stealing papers from our news boxes in Salem, NH, but it's apparent that this guy thinks that because of who he is ... or who he was ... that he can get away with theft and other people are going to sweep it under the rug for him. So, now we are filing a police report and demanding restitution," Duggan added.

Even though the newspapers are free for distribution, under the law, anyone who removes free newspapers to discard is interfering with business practice and committing theft.

"He knows that too," Duggan said.

"This guy is a lawyer, he knows the law, he is a former State Representative and he seems to think that he is above the law. Well, he's not. We've also had a spate of newspaper boxes stolen in the last two years and we are investigating, as well as asking police to investigate, whether or not DiFruscia has anything to do with those thefts. I don't know what DiFruscia's problem is, but we are sure going to find out in court. In the meantime, if anyone sees this guy taking newspapers or removing news boxes, we are offering a $50 reward if you take his photo and send it to us. This is now a felony and we need our readers to keep an eye on this crook. For sure we will prosecute him for every single instance of theft we find."

You can email your photos or any information about stolen papers or news boxes to valleypatriot@aol.com

TOM DUGGAN'S ELECTION NOTEBOOK

HEROES AND BOZOS OF 2014

BOZO OF THE YEAR - LENNY DEGNAN - It takes a lot to get bozo of the year but Lenny Degnan, (former Chief of Staff for Lawrence Mayor Willie Lantigua) has managed to do just that. Degnan was convicted of fraud and corruption earlier this year as the result of his role in the Lantigua shenanigans during his four years as mayor. Degnan was sentenced to 14 months in prison and during his stay at the Essex County House of Correction was put on work detail picking up trash at ... you guessed it... The State House with the rest of the crooks.

HERO - LAWRENCE MAYOR DAN RIVERA

Lawrence Mayor Dan Rivera has fired Willie Lantigua's Chief of Election Shenanigans Rafael Tejeda after years of Tejeda cooking the books for Lantigua, forging signatures on nomination papers and running the most chaotic election department in the state. To date Rivera has removed a number of Lantigua workers who were involved in the shenanigans. We are told that he is sending down City Clerk Billy Maloney's name to the city council for termination. If that happens, Rivera will get HERO again next year too.

BOZO - SALISBURY TOWN MANAGER NEIL HARRINGTON

You have to hand it to Neil Harrington. He delayed and obfuscated our public records request for months regarding how much money the town has spent on legal fees to fight the Tomaselli's $15,000 fake sewer betterment. While we only got a portion of the bills from the Town of Salisbury, the total we have so far is over $100K. That doesn't include the high priced lawyer recently brought on by the town to represent the town in Bankruptcy court, or the years prior to 2005. Harrington also recommended at Town Meeting that the town transfer money from the sewer enterprise fund for the proposed construction for sewer services on the upper Lafayette Corridor and Ferry Road. According to the EPA, the sewer enterprise fund can only be used for operation, maintenance, and equipment replacement for the existing system. Harrington has a group of Bobbleheads on the board of selectmen who simply nod their heads up and down for whatever Harrington wants. The Bobbleheads also get BOZO distinction in 2014 for their complicity in Harrington's shenanigans.

BOZO - HAVERHILL SCHOOL COMMITTEEMAN SHAUN TOOHEY

As a candidate for State Senate, Republican Shaun Toohey didn't bother to show up for the Paying Attention radio debate the Saturday before the election. He also had his signs illegally put up all over the Merrimack Valley on highway off ramps, state and municipal property, abandoned buildings and public sidewalks. Long after the election was over, Toohey signs were still up all over Methuen and Salisbury until finally last week, the final sign in Methuen came down near the Route 213 off ramp on Rt. 28.

HERO - LOWELL MAYOR RODNEY ELLIOTT

Hard enough to be the Mayor of Lowell but Rod Elliott spends a lot of time trying to help our veterans and particularly our wounded veterans. THANK YOU Mayor Elliott for all you do for our vets.

BOZO - STATE SENATOR-ELECT, BARBARA L'ITALIEN - During the election it was revealed that Babs owed more than $7K in back taxes, even though she had loaned more than $13K to her political campaign. When we reported on Babs' tax troubles she tried to put the stink on her opponent Alex Vispoli, claiming he owed liens too. But he didn't. The documents she sent us turned out to show that Vispoli actually paid his taxes. Even worse, for someone who pretends to care so much about the children, I offered to donate $100 to the Salvation Army if Babs would have the courage to come on my radio show and answer a few tough questions about her refusal to pay her taxes, but she declined. Thanks to Babs L'Italien, some poverty stricken, young Black or Latino child will go without a Christmas present this year. I guess her ego is far more important than making a poor minority child happy at Christmas.

DOUBLE BOZO - FORMER LAWRENCE MAYOR WILLIE LANTIGUA

He lost his reelection by 84 votes last year, and this year Willie Lantigua tried to come back and take his old state rep. seat back from arch-rival Marcos Devers. Lantigua got his hat handed to him again. Now the rumor is that Lantigua is thinking about running for city council. Please, dear Lord let it be true! The news business misses you Willie!

HERO - PAVEL PAYANO

He may have blown off the Paying Attention radio debate after making a commitment to show up (usually something that gets you on the BOZO list) but he did not betray his campaign supporters when he lost the primary. While other politicians in the Valley were clamoring to jump on the Barbara L'Italien bandwagon after the primary, Pavel Payano showed strength of conviction and political maturity and took a pass.

HERO – DORIS RODRIGUEZ

First, the disclaimer. She worked her tail off for the Democratic nomination for State Senate against Barbara L'Italien and then she did the unthinkable when she lost the primary to Babs ... she endorsed Babs L'Italien. That's a BOZO move no matter how you look at it and one we hope Rodriguez now regrets. So why is she on the HERO list? Despite her betrayal of the issues she said she cared about before the primary, Doris Rodriguez is the real deal. She has a genuine concern for the City of Lawrence and the people who live there. She volunteers a great deal of her time to helping the poor and uneducated in Lawrence. She took a lot of heat from her party and some rabid Payano supporters before the primary and she held her ground. That's why it was so disappointing when she endorsed Babs, but we have to remember she is a rookie. Doris is good at helping the community, organizing events, and volunteering her time, but, she is still new at this political game. I hope Doris doesn't get too discouraged by her loss to Babs L'Italien and thinks about representing the City of Lawrence on the city council in 2015. I've been particularly tough on Doris since she lost the primary because I don't want her to get sucked into the concept of "team politics" (as in you always support your party no matter what). She does deserve another chance and I hope she runs again.

BOZO - HAVERHILL COUNCILOR BILL RYAN

Despite the fact that the Merrimack Valley Tea Party members campaigned hard for state senate candidate Shawn Toohey, Haverhill Councilor Bill Ryan (Toohey's father-in-law) took to the airwaves after Toohey's devestating loss and attacked the Tea Party members who had worked on the campaign. It sure gave a warm and fuzzy feeling to everyone who held signs in the cold and rain, stuffed envelopes, made phone calls, and spent time away from their families to help Mr. Toohey's campaign. As a side note, many, MANY Valley Patriot readers called and texted us daily during the campaign to tell us Ryan was illegally putting up campaign signs on state property.

HERO - WCAP'S WARREN SHAW

Lowell radio host Warren Shaw may be an old curmudgeon that only I could aspire to be, but every year Warren throws off the rough exterior and helps the Salvation Army raise thousands of dollars through his radio telethon and auction. Shaw can be heard Saturdays from 6-10AM on 980WCAP. Bid on some great items and help out a good cause. (978) 454-4980.

HERO - LAWRENCE SCHOOL COMMITTEEMAN MYRA ORTIZ

Myra Ortiz is not only a member of the completely irrelevant (sorry Myra) Lawrence School Committee, she also donates a great deal of her time trying to help kids in Lawrence. Myra is a doer! She doesn't get caught up in the team politics and gets along with those on both sides of heated and contentious issues.

BOZO - DEVAL PATRICK

Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick is puppet for left wing ideologues and hate merchants. Every year he ends up on the BOZO list, and this year is no different. Last month, Patrick showed his long held hatred for police and contempt for our government and criminal justice system when he said he had hoped Ferguson Police Officer Darren Wilson had been indicted. He holds this belief because Wilson is white and it is the belief of Patrick and his left wing "progressives" that white men in power are always bad. It truly is sad when black leaders show their hatred for white people while pretending to care about "civil rights" and equality. But then again, what do you want from a guy who willingly fought to put a convicted cop killer back on the streets before he was governor?

HERO - LAWRENCE CITY COUNCILOR MARC LAPLANTE

Lawrence City Councilor Marc LaPlante is one of the few people in Lawrence who actually works for the community. He is involved at every level and he does so without injecting the usual dirty politics that has so plagued Lawrence City Hall. This year, LaPlante pulled off a major political coup when he got Lawrence Republicans to switch sides and support Democrat Marcos Devers for State Representative over Republican Roger Twomey in an effort to defeat Independent Willie Lantigua. His activism and the help of Dan Macland-Rivera made the difference between a return

CONT.. UNDER FREDDIE

You Have No Right to Resist Arrest

Joe D'Amore
VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

Somewhere in America today there are law enforcement officers that wear the uniform , a gun and a badge and perpetrate the greatest discharge of public trust because they are thugs. There are also criminals- some petty, some serious that perpetually push the envelope of civility through their derelict and lawless actions. In far greater numbers there are law enforcement officers who are dedicated servants of the public, sworn and capable to uphold the sacred trust. There are individuals who make bad choices and find themselves on the wrong side of the law.

There are no constitutional rights for resisting arrest as equally, there are no rights to unlawfully take a life or incarcerate a person by applying false or inappropriate authority. And so in America today the streets are filled with protesters, grand juries have grappled with impossible tasks and divisiveness dominates because justice is elusive.

On the Holy Grail of civil rights many pin their hopes for their version of justice to be meted out. But the reality is that no level of justice will adequately provide the salve to quell the outrage until there is a reaffirmation of trust between those who are in authority and those law-abiding people who believe they are under threat by that authority

There are no easy answers, but there are ideas that will put us all on the path to peace. Community policing is the highest priority and applicable everywhere. Public policy and resources must be committed to it. The use of special prosecutors in police brutality cases is also a must. This is necessary to diffuse the natural conflict of interest held by a grand jury prosecuting team who maintains a working relationship with a law enforcement agency.

And finally, there is due process fairly applied. If one breaks the law, there must be consequences. Those who wear the badge and feel entitled to not uphold the law and those who wage war against them should ultimately bear the burden of justice.

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LAWRENCE MAYOR DAN RIVERA RECENTLY FIRED ELECTION COORDINATOR RAFAEL TEJEDA AFTER A SCATHING REPORT ABOUT THE CHAOS IN RUNNING OF LAWRENCE ELECTIONS. SEE STORY PAGE 7.

to power for Willie Lantigua or a win for Marcos Devers.

BOZO - LAWRENCE COUNCILOR ROGER TWOMEY

We tried to tell Lawrence City Councilor At-Large Roger Twomey before the election that he had no shot in a three-way contest for state rep. between he, Devers and Lantigua. Had Twomey spent a little more money and campaigned a little harder, he may have taken just enough votes away from Marcos Devers in South Lawrence to ensure a Lantigua win. But, of course you couldn't tell that to Roger or his well-meaning supporters before the election. Instead of listening to solid political advice, Twomey supporters preferred to attack the messenger (yours truly) for telling the ugly truth. As a side note, a BIG BOZO to those who told Roger Twomey that they had some magic campaign strategy that could get Twomey elected to the state rep seat. Those are the people who almost got Lantigua elected again and used Roger to do it. Maybe someday, Roger will get it that your true friends are the ones who tell you what you don't want to hear when you need to hear it the most. Those who were saying differently were certainly not doing Twomey any favors.

HERO - STATE AUDITOR SUZANNE BUMP

So, she's a Democrat with wacky liberal ideas. Who cares. She's a State Auditor, and as the State Auditor she has exposed more fraud with her public audits than any other auditor before her. She called attention to the fraud in the Social Security Administration where she found that millions in benefits were being handed out to dead people, exposed the mismanagement of DFC, EBT fraud in the millions and, when her own party head Deval Patrick said her audits were wrong, she proved him to be the fraud that he is and did more audits backing up her previous findings. That gets a DOUBLE HERO in my book.

BOZO - NORTH ANDOVER SELECTMAN ROSEMARY SMEDILE

What can I say? She decided behind my back to challenge my State Rep., Diana DiZoglio last year. She never picked up the phone to discuss it with me, she never came to my office to do an interview on her campaign, yet she assumed for some bizarre reason that I would just automatically turn my back on Diana DiZoglio and support her because she is a Republican. Then she was shocked.... shocked... that I contributed to DiZoglio's campaign. She also voted to raise taxes as a member of the board of selectmen, yet she portrayed herself as an anti-tax candidate. What's worse, Smedile blew off the a debate on the Paying Attention Radio Show because she didn't want to answer questions about the bogus fliers she sent out to voters erroneously claiming DiZoglio favored giving housing benefits to illegals over veterans.

Knowing her the way I do, I can imagine how personally hurt Rosemary would be if someone falsely claimed that she was favoring illegals getting benefits over our hero veterans. I called shenanigans then and I call it now. This is not the Rosemary I thought I knew. I like Rosemary and have no personal ill will, but the hurt she caused with that particular lie on the campaign trail was hateful and hurtful to not only DiZoglio but our veterans, some of whom still think their representative is anti-veteran.

HERO - REP. MARCOS DEVERS

Yes, he defeated Willie Lantigua at the ballot box fair and square (no thanks to Roger Twomey), but Marcos gets HERO status this year for another reason. During the campaign, Devers declared that he favors Voter ID and denounced the idea that Voter ID is "racist". Devers said that he has seen election fraud with his own eyes for years in Lawrence politics. As a Dominican and a Democrat in Massachusetts, it is not easy to break with the party lie ... er ... I mean line on Voter ID, but Devers, like Mayor Dan Rivera supports protecting the integrity of the voting process.

BOZO – METHUEN MAYOR STEVE ZANNI

It's hard to say bad things about Democrat Steve Zanni because he's such a likable guy, but this year Zanni pulled a BOZO move when he endorsed Phil DeCologero for State Representative over incumbent State Rep. Diana DiZoglio in the Democratic primary. Not only did DiZoglio defeat DeCologero on primary day, but also she slaughtered him 7-1 showing that Zanni had no influence over Methuen voters. Now, Zanni has to work with DiZoglio after working hard to unseat her and that should be punishment enough, but I think he deserves to be on the 2014 BOZO list. As a side note, Zanni comes up for reelection this year and I hope all those DiZoglio supporters in Methuen remember whose side Zanni was on when it really counted.

COLLECTIVE BOZOS - LENNY DEGNAN'S POSSE OF DEFENDERS

During the sentencing phase of convicted

NOTEBOOK: PAGE 30

Lawrence Police Start New Citizen Complaint, Commendation Procedure

Lawrence Mayor Dan Rivera and Acting Police Chief Fitzpatrick announced last month the reorganization and streamlining of the Lawrence Police Department Professional Standards Unit (formerly known as Internal Affairs), with a new citizen complaint and commendation procedure.

After reviewing past department practices and the need for modernizing the unit, Mayor Rivera and Chief Fitzpatrick laid out these formal changes: new bilingual complaint and commendation forms, a thorough complaint and commendation intake process and a new complaint and commendation telephone line not connected to the Department phone lines.

"We have some of the finest police officers serving our City and this modernization will help support them and will let everyone know that if you have a complaint that there is a process for hearing that complaint and that people will be held accountable for it."

"I see this modernization and the IAPro software as a way to protect citizens and police officers," said Acting Police Chief James Fitzpatrick.

"The more thorough we are in reviewing complaints the more disciplined we can be as a force and we will have greater credibility with the community."

By calling (978) 857-3200 or by going to lawpd.com/civilian-complaint-form.aspx citizens can place a complaint or commendation about any officer by phone or on-line.

This reorganization tells the community that if you have a complaint or a compliment for a job well done for one of our men or women that you will be heard in English or Spanish.

As part of the modernization, the City is adopting a nationally renowned and first rate professional standards software called IAPro. IAPro software will be used by the Lawrence Police Department's Professional Standards Unit as a case management and tracking tool. IAPro is the leading professional standards software used by police agencies across the U.S.

This software platform is used by over 500 agencies including the Massachusetts State Police and the Boston Police Department. IAPro will assist the Lawrence Police Department in identifying potential problems early on, so that proactive action can be taken. "Professional Standards is exactly what it sounds like," said Mayor Dan Rivera.

"Positive officer interaction with the community is paramount to the job, and this software will give us a better view at what we can do better."

IAPro features include:

• Early identification and intervention; set alerts to identify Officers for intervention and training.

• Case management; point and click display of units caseload, ability to set automatic reminders to ensure timely completion of cases.

• Statistical reports; a broad range of reports and charts which include aggregate, trend, exception and comparative formats.

To round out the reorganization, Acting Chief Fitzpatrick has assigned Lieutenant Mike McCarthy as the superior officer to run the unit. Lt. McCarthy will process all the complaints and commendations and he will be supported when necessary with bilingual and/or female officers.

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Awareness for COPD - 3rd Leading Cause of Death

IN YOUR CORNER WITH SENATOR KATY IVES

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) is the third leading cause of death in the United States. It disproportionately impacts women and is caused by smoking and poor air quality. It severely impacts quality of life by causing a shortness of breath, which makes it difficult to do the most basic things and carries significant health care costs. In 2008, the cost to the nation for COPD and asthma was estimated to be approximately $68.0 billion in healthcare expenditures and lost productivity. Although there is no cure for COPD, early detection is essential to manage the symptoms that are caused by COPD and improve quality of life.

In 2012, the legislature created a special commission to investigate and study strategies to promote public awareness and increase knowledge of the causes of COPD and the importance of early diagnosis, effective prevention strategies, and disease management. I was appointed by the Senate Chair on the Joint Committee of Public Health as his designee to chair this commission. It is in the final stages of appointments by the Governor and I am ready to begin this important work.

While COPD isn't the most commonly known or understood disease, its impact on health, death and health care costs is significant. Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) is a term that refers to two lung diseases, chronic bronchitis and emphysema. The term COPD is used because both diseases are characterized by obstruction to airflow that interferes with normal breathing, and the two frequently co-exist. COPD is the name for a group of diseases that restrict air flow and cause trouble breathing. COPD includes emphysema and chronic bronchitis.

Although tobacco use is the primary cause of COPD in the United States, air pollutants at home (such as secondhand smoke and some heating fuels) and at work (such as dusts, gases, and fumes), and genetic predisposition also can cause COPD. Other risk factors of COPD include exposure to air pollution, secondhand smoke and occupational dusts and chemicals, heredity, a history of childhood respiratory infections and socioeconomic status.

Last year, I sponsored a bill that would require the use of pulse oximetry screenings for newborns to enhance the possibility of detection of congenital heart defects in infants. This year, I plan on filing a bill that will expand pulse oximetry screenings to adults. Pulse oximetry screenings could have a valuable role in determining long term oxygen therapy criteria in patients with COPD. This is a noninvasive test that can be done during your annual physical that estimates the percent of oxygen in your blood.

I look forward to serving on this commission and finding ways to address awareness of this disease as well as effectively treating and diagnosing people.

What I Saw in Ferguson - Mixed Messages

Christine Morabito
VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

The 21,000 residents of Ferguson, Missouri have been unwitting pawns in a game where everybody loses. Over the past several months, racial unrest has caused an unwelcome invasion of anarchists, occupiers, Communist agitators, race-baiters, convicted felons, and otherwise petty criminals, who refuse to let the facts get in the way of a good riot.

One thing is clear: there is a distinct difference between the peaceful protestors and the rioters. This was especially apparent on that fateful night of Monday, November 24, when the grand jury found no probable cause to indict police officer Darren Wilson for the killing of Michael Brown.

The protests aside, nothing excuses those bent on creating mayhem. Exhibit A: Michael Brown's mother's boyfriend, Louis Head, who grabbed a microphone and screamed "Burn this b**ch down!" And that they did, as fiery chaos soon ensued. That night more than a dozen businesses, private vehicles and police cars were set ablaze or otherwise vandalized. Rioters pelted police with bricks, rocks and bottles, some filled with urine. Other coordinated criminal acts included forming human chains to block roads and interstates. Within hours, similar scenes were replicated all over the country.

The Blaze reported that Gregory Lee Johnson, Chicago anarchist and member of the Revolutionary Communist Party, was photographed with others lighting Molotov cocktails and stoking the flames via megaphone, encouraging the crowd to intentionally defy police. Other foreign agitators included members of the New Black Panther Party, arrested for planning to bomb the Gateway arch and kill police. Even ISIS joined the fray, offering to assist rioters through Twitter messages, if only they would first convert to Islam. Sharing the blame for exploiting this crisis was Al Sharpton – well, for being Al Sharpton.

Meanwhile, local community leaders and clergy members of all races and denominations pleaded for calm, consoling the innocent victims -- the residents, cowering inside their homes, the children, for whom school was cancelled, and the businesses (many black-owned) who were vandalized, burnt to the ground, or forced to close due to unrest and uncertainty.

I visited Ferguson less than a week later and expected to find a city in ruin. What I found instead filled me with hope.

Surprisingly forgiving were the area businesses, forced to board up their windows, either because of vandalism or to prevent it. Making the best of their lot, locals expressed themselves through art. Hence, powerful messages and murals now adorn the otherwise unsightly plywood walls. Yard signs reading "I love Ferguson" were everywhere. Churches used their marquees to advertise prayers of forgiveness and peace. No doubt, many wish the world had never heard of Ferguson, Missouri.

Christine Morabito is a resident of Haverhill and former President of the Greater Boston Tea Party. You can email her at christine.morabito@hotmail.com

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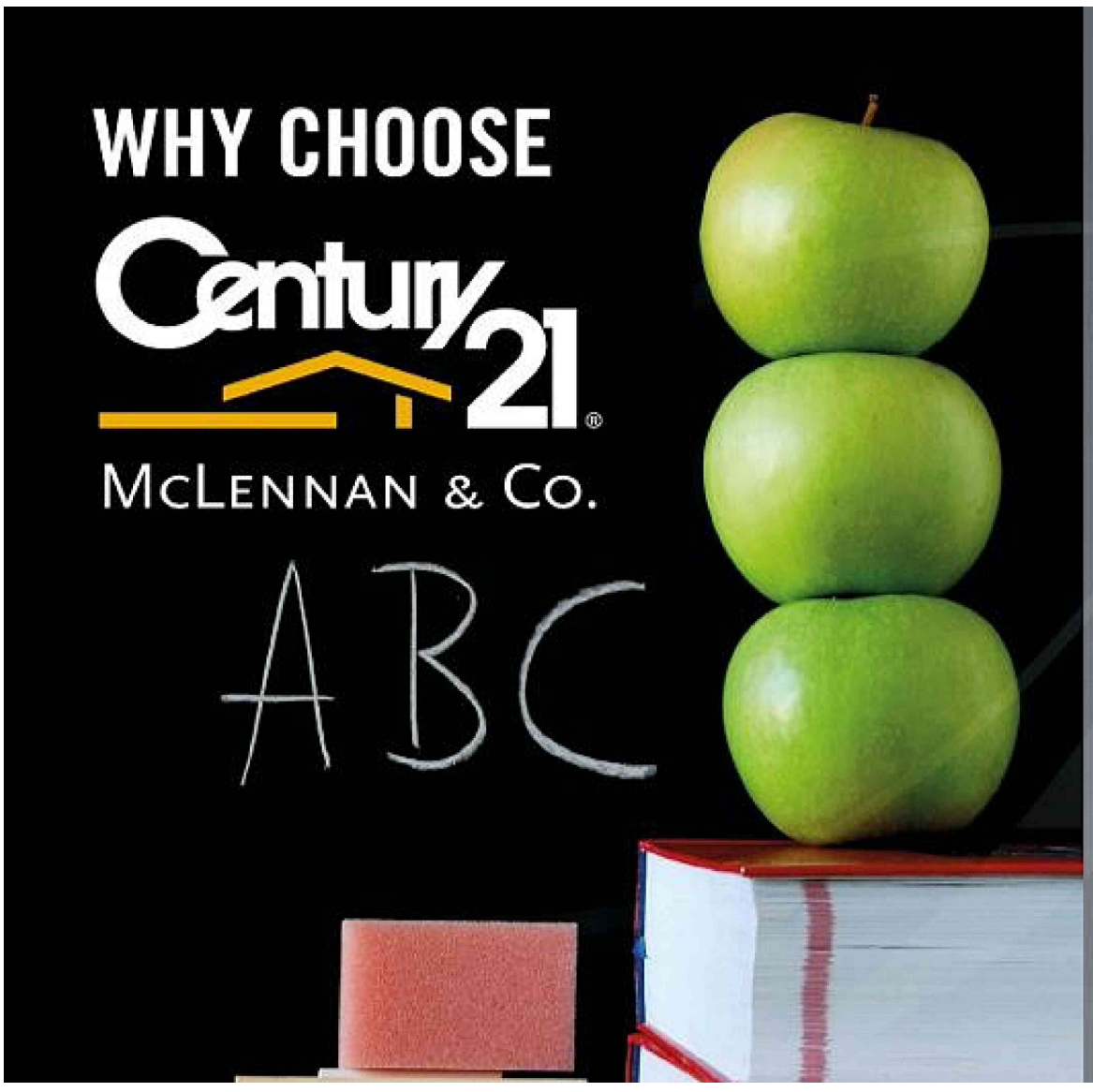

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Thoughts from Councilor #5

2014 A Year in Review

Daniel Grayton
METHUEN CITY COUNCILOR

As the year draws to a close I thought it appropriate to highlight some of the highs and lows that took place in Methuen in 2014.

IT PRIVATIZATION

It took two different councils and three different proposals for the Mayor to finally pass a measure restructuring and privatizing the city's IT Dept- a move designed to save money and provide a more efficient and modern service to the city. Though still fairly early on in the transition, the positive results have already impressed even the proposal's harshest critics. In fact, the possibility of privatizing the IT Department at the schools is now being explored. However, judging by the immediate and aggressive push back from school officials, further IT privatization will likely be slow in coming.

NEW CITY SOLICITOR

Yet another issue that spanned two separate councils was the hiring of a new City Solicitor. In mid 2013, the decision was made to hire an outside law firm to represent the city and a search committee was formed to choose a new solicitor. The process was ultimately unsuccessful and the issue was tabled until the new council could address the issue this year. By this time, some councilors were advocating for keeping the outside firm as a permanent replacement for the City Solicitor, while others preferred an "in house" solicitor who would occupy an office in city hall on a daily basis. The question of privatization was again debated. Ultimately, a majority of councilors chose to begin a new search which ended in the hiring of Kerry Jenness, an Assistant City Solicitor from Lowell.

PROJECTS GET UNDER WAY

This year, numerous projects were initiated throughout the city of Methuen. One instance of this was the breaking of ground on the Rt. 93 rotary project. Whether it's the dozens of missing trees or the now familiar orange traffic barrels, this long-term project has already begun to transform the area. Another example is the boat-ramp at Bea's sight. Although not scheduled to be fully functioning until spring, once open, this project can be expected to draw many eager boaters to the banks of the Merrimack. Also making progress is the new clubhouse at the athletic complex. While ground has not yet been broken, most of the money required for the project has been raised by the Mayor, and once a contract is awarded sometime in early 2015, the project should move quickly.

BIG BUSINESS BLUES

One of several disappointments of the year was dealt out recently when the Community Development Board unanimously approved a cell tower to be installed on West Street in Methuen. Despite unified, well organized opposition from members of the neighborhood, councilors and various employees of the city, the tower will be erected. Another significant source of frustration is the possibility of the expansion of a natural gas pipeline through a west district neighborhood. Despite only being in the exploratory phases, there is even less recourse for the city than with the cell tower due to regulations far outside the cities purview. Because of this, the pipeline project promises to provide much contention over the coming year, not just in the Merrimack Valley, but reaching out into Western Massachusetts as well.

TAX RATE

Probably the biggest unanswered question of the year concerns the tax rate. Unfortunately, this question, likely to be decided by mid-month, has become not if taxes will increase, but by how much. Speculation is not productive at this point, but it is safe to say that when the time comes to set the new rate, discussion will be lively. Even though the die was cast in June with the passing of the Fiscal Year '15 budget, the exact rate of increase remains unknown. With new growth and higher home values, the hope is the increase may not be as significant as previously thought.

QUICK PERSONAL NOTE

I'd like to quickly thank Tommy Duggan for the opportunity to provide these monthly commentaries to you. I have received many positives comments on several of the issues I have talked about, and look forward to continuing to provide insight into many of the important topics affecting Methuen in the coming year. Merry Christmas!

*Daniel Grayton is currently serving as a Councilor at-Large in the City of Methuen. He can be reached at Daniel*Grayton@gmail.com

Flag Retirement Ceremony

The annual Methuen Flag Retirement Ceremony was held at the Veterans Lot in Methuen's Elmwood Cemetery earlier this month in commemorationof Pearl Harbor Day.

"This is an annual happening in Methuen," says Veterans Services director Tom Hargreaves. "It serves to properly honor the meaning of our flag." After a brief ceremony including the colors being presented by the Methuen Police Department Honor Guard, the Flags will be respectfully burned, which is the prescribed method of disposal of unserviceable Flags.

"Our community is very conscious of the contributions of our brave Veterans," says Mayor Steve Zanni. "These ceremonies are so important to remember their sacrifices."

Methuen Public Schools Awarded $28K for Professional Development

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education announced today that a $28,000 grant will be used to expand professional development practices for students in Methuen. The Massachusetts Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) Partnership Grant is awarded for one year with the goal of delivering evidence-based professional development in content areas.

This grant will provide opportunities for educators to apply their newly acquired skills and knowledge to classrooms, schools, and districts. This grant also provides opportunities for district and school level administrators, educators, and families from across the Commonwealth to observe the implementation of these practices.

"I am very pleased that the MTSS Partnership grant was awarded to Methuen. These funds will do great work in professional development for students, faculty and families involved with Methuen Public Schools" said Representative Frank A. Moran (D-Lawrence).

"I join my fellow colleagues in the Methuen legislative delegation in celebrating the announcement of this MTSS Partnership Grant. These are funds that will immensely benefit our students, families and faculty and I look very much forward to seeing the positive results of this investment," said Representative Diana DiZoglio (D-Methuen).

"I am very pleased that the City of Methuen has received a grant in the amount of $28,000 through the Massachusetts Tiered System of Supports. This grant will provide professional development opportunities for district and school level administrators, educators, and families and will help ensure that teachers have the necessary training to implement new curriculums," said Representative Linda Dean Campbell (D-Methuen).

"This grant will provide educators more opportunities to enhance curriculum to better serve students to succeed," said State Senator Kathleen O'Connor Ives.

The content areas to be addressed include Universal Design for Learning (UDL), Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), Secondary Transition, Family Engagement, Social Emotional Needs of Children and Families in the Mixed Delivery System, District-level Structures and Supports, and Academic Content Areas.

7 Warning Signs That an Older Relative Could Use More Support

Gregory Batchelder
METHUEN VILLAGE, SENIOR LIVING

I have found over my many years of working in the senior living industry that holiday visits are often a wake-up call for adult children who realize their parent isn't doing all that well living alone. Although it can be tough facing the reality of elderly relatives more frail or forgetful than the last time you visited, it's a great opportunity to make a change for the better.

Use this checklist to determine whether your parent could benefit from a more supportive living arrangement.

1. Check the mail: The mail offers clues to how your parent is managing money, a common warning sign of cognitive trouble. Look for unopened bills, letters from banks or creditors, or thank-you messages from charities.

2. Give a hug: Clues aren't always visible from a distance. You might learn more from a hug. Look for obvious weight loss or gain, or increased frailty.

3. Check the medicine cabinet: Individuals over 65 take an average of 14 prescriptions a year and those over 80 more than 19. That's a lot to keep track of! Medication errors are leading causes of hospitalization in older adults. Look for expired, discontinued or duplicate prescription bottles.

4. Inspect the kitchen: This room is especially revealing. Look for expired perishables, multiples of the same item, a freezer full of frozen dinners, broken appliances, signs of past fire.

5. Walk around the house and yard: Lack of maintenance may mean that your parent needs more help. Look for clutter, lax housekeeping, grimy bathrooms, and signs of neglect.

6. Observe your parent's social life: Social circles can shrink with age, which can have health and safety implications. Look for signs of isolation: rarely leaving the house, disinterest in activities that were once important, lacking a group of friends to socialize with.

7. Take a drive: Ask your parent to take you out for a spin. Look for dents, signs of being easily distracted, impaired driving, and dashboard warning lights.

Encouraging a parent to move can be stressful for all concerned. Keep in mind that Assisted Living does not mean a loss of independence. Quite the contrary! Assisted Living is designed to maximize autonomy within an environment that provides seniors with choices, celebrates their individuality and allows them to thrive. Your Mom or Dad will enjoy a safe, comfortable, social lifestyle and you'll spend less time worrying and more time enjoying your times together as you visit.

Reach out to me at Methuen Village Assisted Living and Compass Memory Support with any questions about assisted living. I am happy to guide you through the research process, help sort out financial issues, and provide the information you need so that you can make the best decision for your family.

Greg Batchelder is the Executive Director of Methuen Village an Assisted Living and Alzheimer's Care Community in Methuen.

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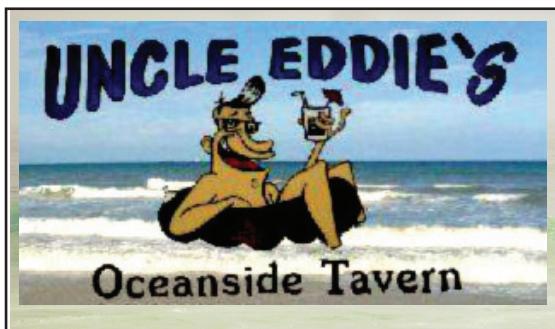

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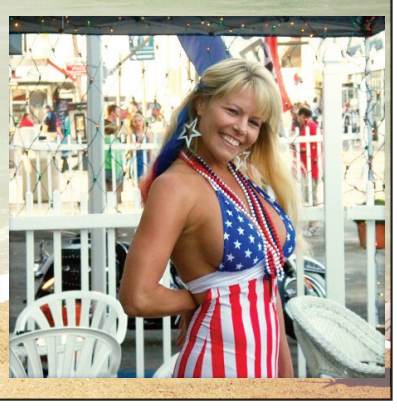

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- Frances "Fran" Jacobs
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Pointing Fingers, the Corrupt Hypocrisy On the Council

Kathy Runge
VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

The election has come and gone, the employee residency requirement has been discussed ad nauseam by the council with more to come, and we've had more senseless deaths of young people in Lawrence.

The residents of Lawrence can breathe a sigh of relief that William Lantigua isn't on the public payroll again. I heard that he's considering running for City Council. If so, I'm hoping he runs for Councilor-at-Large as no one knows where he really lives.

City Councilors, here's a charter amendment to consider: No resident who has refused to testify before or been the subject of a grand jury investigating government corruption shall be allowed to run for any municipal elective office.

What qualities should we be looking for in a city councilor?

It's time for every voter in the city to start thinking about this as municipal elections are less than a year away. We need qualified and educated councilors!

One of the first questions a candidate for councilor should answer is: What do you want to do as a councilor that you can't do as a private citizen?

Everyone wants to make Lawrence better, reduce crime, etcetera. Apart from performing constituent services, a good councilor needs specific goals, goals that can be best addressed as a councilor. We don't need more "cruise directors." Councilors should spend a few years working toward their goals and then get out. They should have term limits. Being a councilor isn't supposed to be your permanent part time job! Establishing term limits for councilors ensures an ever expanding group of people would have the knowledge to hold the government accountable and has the added advantage of limiting the reigns of incompetent councilors.

Even a good councilor shouldn't make it a lifetime occupation. We need more people to be aware of and actively participate in the decision making process in our city, and having councilors serve in perpetuity does not encourage that.

Viewer alert! Get your popcorn ready; the City Council is requesting that Mayor Rivera appear in front of them for a chastising at the Dec. 16th meeting. The title of the document submitted by Council President Maldonaldo is "Request for the Attendance of Mayor Rivera Before City Council - RE: function, powers, authority, and duties within the scope of the Office of Mayor."

Finally some of the councilors are realizing that mayors overstep their authority! I guess they finally agree with Councilor Laplante, who pointed this out during Mayor Lantigua's administration. A few disgruntled employees spoke during the public participation section of the Dec. 2nd meeting.

One of the speakers was Nazario Esquea, a city employee and longtime Lantigua ally who didn't get another city job that he applied for. Ironically, one of the issues councilors are finally concerned about is temporary city positions, which come in a variety of flavors and are supposed to be of limited duration.

It seems the council is unhappy that many "temporary" workers stay more than the allotted time. Boy, nothing gets by these guys! That's been happening for many years. It only took a mayor they didn't endorse to get some of them to notice. For instance, Nazario Esquea started his career with the city as a temp under Mayor Lantigua and worked in that capacity longer than the allotted time, eventually getting the permanent position he now holds.

I wonder how many interviews Willy conducted for that position. Where was and is the council's outrage over this instance of mayoral overstepping? It's non-existent; the concerned councilors are upset that Mr. Esquea didn't get promoted.

Another personnel faux pas committed by Mayor Lantigua was the demotion of Deputy Police Chief Mike Driscoll and the unilateral promotion of his campaign manager, Sgt. Melix Bonilla, to "Acting" Deputy Chief. Outrage, I ask? Oh no, not about that; the outrage is because Rivera demoted Bonilla back to the positon of sergeant.

Lorenza Ortega, William Lantigua's mistress/wife/ex-wife, provides yet another example cited by the council for her unjust removal. She was promoted to her final city position as secretary in

LAWRENCE: PAGE 21

Four Lawrence Catholic Academy Students Inducted into 5th Class of Peter S. Lynch Scholars by the Catholic Schools Foundation

Four Lawrence Catholic Academy Student are inducted into fifth class of Peter S. Lynch Scholars by the Catholic Schools Foundation

On Tuesday, October 21st, at a Mass followed by a breakfast reception at Our Lady Help of Christians Parish in Newton, MA, Cardinal Sean O'Malley of the Archdiocese of Boston inducted the fifth class of Peter Lynch (PL) Scholars. Isaac Matos, Julian Rijo, Paige Slabczynski, and Naleeah Tejada-Suarez from Lawrence Catholic Academy were four of 173 students from across the Greater Boston area that were selected for this program. For the 2014-2015 school year, the Catholic Schools Foundation distributed over $250,000 to these scholars in 58 schools.

Cardinal O'Malley was accompanied by Michael B. Reardon, Executive Director of the Catholic Schools Foundation, and Kathy Mears, Superintendent for Catholic Schools in the Archdiocese of Boston. Mike Reardon remarked, "Cardinal Sean reminded us of the importance of using our God-given talents and working hard. Peter Lynch did just that and now the Peter Lynch Scholars are a legacy he will leave." In addition, ten pastors concelebrated the Mass.

Mr. Lynch, known for his successful career as a money manager at Fidelity Investments, is a longtime supporter of Boston's Catholic Schools and serves as chairman emeritus for the Catholic Schools Foundation. In his honor, The Peter Lynch (PL) Scholars Program was established in 2010 to honor Mr. Lynch's involvement with the Catholic Schools Foundation/Inner-City Scholarship Fund. Each Catholic elementary school selects their PL Scholars based upon, among other criteria, his or her grades, work ethic, and demonstrated care and concern for others in the school community and beyond.

According to Lawrence Catholic Academy Principal Jorge Hernandez, "The commitment of Mr. Lynch and the Catholic Schools Foundation to offer scholarships to our students is key in helping LCA meet its goal of serving our community in offering a quality Catholic education. The fact that 4 LCA students were chosen as Peter Lynch Scholars, serves as a testament to our school and to Mr. Lynch, the CSF and all of their donors. Their work and the gifts of their time, talent and treasure to help ensure that Catholic education will endure and be a real possibility to those students and families that seek it is appreciated by the community at LCA."

Lawrence Catholic Academy is an elementary Nursery through Grade 8 school located in Lawrence, Massachusetts. It offers a quality, motivating and full-bodied curriculum, enlightened by Catholic teaching and offers all students an excellent education in a faith-filled and supportive environment.

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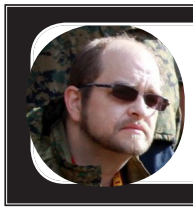

Paying Attention!
WITH TOM DUGGAN

Little Dick thinks Talking About Ebola is Racist ... The Insanity of Little Dick Howe

Normally I like to chide my good friend Little Dick Howe in my column, but this month his hysteria on race and Ebola was so filled with paranoid delusions that I thought I would just share his own words and let you judge for yourself.

"Ebola -Have you noticed that the media outlets that spent the summer stoking fear of illegal immigrants are the same ones inciting hysteria over Ebola? What do those two things have in common? Oh yes, they both involve people who don't have white skin. Racism and bigotry, both explicit and coded, are alive and well in the Merrimack Valley and throughout America.

Ebola is a deadly disease but it's not new or mysterious. Unless you somehow exchange bodily fluids with an Ebola patient, you don't get Ebola. It's tragic that two nurses in Dallas became infected while caring for the one patient who did have the disease, but it's pretty clear that what the American health care system thought was a prudent level of preparedness for care givers was inadequate. Hopefully medical professionals have received that wake-up call and tighten up their safety protocols. They need look no further than the doctors and nurses working in the midst of the epidemic in West Africa for practices that keep health care providers safe while they treat infected individuals.

As for the rest of us, don't fall prey to the ignorance and misinformation being spewed by so many media outlets. Winter is coming and so is the season for colds and flu. Get your flu shot. Wash your hands – often. And vote YES on Question 4 which will give all employees in Massachusetts paid sick time so if they are not feeling well, they can stay home and take care of themselves and not feel obliged to drag themselves ill into work or risk losing their jobs.

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UML hockey & basketball, BC football,
Spinners Baseball, and high school sports.
SATURDAYS: it's Warren Shaw, 6-10A,
"Paying Attention w/Tom Duggan," 10A-noon
(hear it on WCAP, read it in The Valley Patriot),
"Money Pit", home improvement, noon-1P, & "The Car Doctor" 1P-2P.
SUNDAYS: it's "Paul Parent's Garden Show", "Talking Birds", "Senior Living", Ron Morrison Real Estate, "Free Money" financials, "Gun Talk", "Shalom America" & "Cambodia Town".

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BENEATH THE SURFACE, MON. 9-11PM

Vibrations from Ferguson

John MacDonald
VALLEY PATRIOT LOWELL COLUMNIST

On November 13, 2014, Congresswoman Tsongas led a hearing on police militarization following protests in Ferguson, Missouri in the House of Representatives. During that hearing she was quoted by the Lowell Sun as saying, "When you saw peaceful protesters being confronted with armored vehicles, having assault weapons pointed at them, that did raise a lot of questions around militarization of local police departments," Tsongas told The Sun after the hearing. "When you see an MRAP (mine-resistant ambush-protected vehicle) on the street of a small community, you have to ask the question if this is appropriate," she added.

Winston Churchill was quoted once as saying, "You have enemies? Good. It means you've stood up for something, sometime in your life." Upfront I have no intention of creating an enemy, but I do know that my position on supporting law enforcement, conflicts greatly with Congresswoman Tsongas's point of view. Also in fair disclosure, several years ago I publically commended her for her passion and support of active duty military and our veterans. Unfortunately, and how quickly… things can change.

As better stated, "What have you done for us lately?" I mean, other than blindly support President Obama and his extreme left wing agenda and forget about those who serve and protect all of us?

As I focus on Congresswoman Tsongas's own words, I have become greatly concerned for the safety of our citizens and law enforcement nationwide when we have elected officials seemingly more interested in protecting gangsters who rob convenience stores or illegal immigrants, than its citizens and law enforcement itself.

Providing our law enforcement with access to life saving body armor, vehicles and weapons as well as computers and technical equipment is essential in helping law enforcement protect its citizens and themselves. The current negative political attitude towards law enforcement by the Obama administration and the extreme left wing of the Democratic Party is disturbing to say the least. From beer summits to the automatic assumption of guilt for a police officer in Ferguson, The President, his administration and his supporters in Congress have subscribed to race based reactionary philosophies that support a blatant distrust for the men and woman in blue. It's a philosophy that should be rejected and I wholeheartedly stand against.

Any political circle or politician that considers Al Sharpton as their advisor or as their standard-bearer has lost my support.

How many professions do you know of like law enforcement, where when they leave home, there's a good chance they will not come back alive?

The life threatening circumstances law enforcement faces every minute of the day is inconceivable. Law enforcement is often called upon to protect our citizens from criminals that are often better equipped with illegal weapons and technology than the police asked to serve and protect us. Providing our first responders with weapons and military grade equipment should be supported, not rejected. With the threat of terrorism and ISIS here at home, which is due in part to US/Mexico open border policies, this should be reason alone to supply law enforcement with the tools necessary to combat these threats.

How quickly Congresswoman Tsongas forgets the courageous and heroic actions that took place in Watertown, Massachusetts after the Boston Marathon bombings. If it weren't for the military grade equipment and the heroism of our men and woman in law enforcement, we wouldn't have captured one of the worst terrorists in American history.

As a concerned citizen and military veteran, I want our law enforcement to have the capability and protection to do their difficult job. I want law enforcement there when called upon to protect our property and lives. I want them there to protect our children and communities, without hesitation and with the best resources possible.

Finally, I ask our Congresswoman if riots similar to the ones in Ferguson took place in the Merrimack Valley or if the Boston Marathon Bombing terrorists had roamed through the streets near her home, would she have thought it appropriate for our local police to have access to military grade equipment or an MRAP (mine-resistant-ambush-protected vehicle)? My gut tells me she would, and so would the rest of us.

It's time for Congress to focus on the real priorities and reject a witch hunt by the Obama administration towards law enforcement. It's time for law enforcement to realize who their friends are in Congress and who is not. It's time for citizens to stand beside those who serve and protect us, without hesitation, every minute of every day, in every community across the country.

John MacDonald is the President/CEO of Big Decisions, LLC, which is a management consulting business that concentrates on offering strategic advice on Marketing, Public Relations, Economic/ Business Development and Social Media. John has a long career of success, achieving record results in the communications field and spending over 20 years managing marketing budgets, driving the bottom line in the financial services, restaurant, retail and real estate industries.

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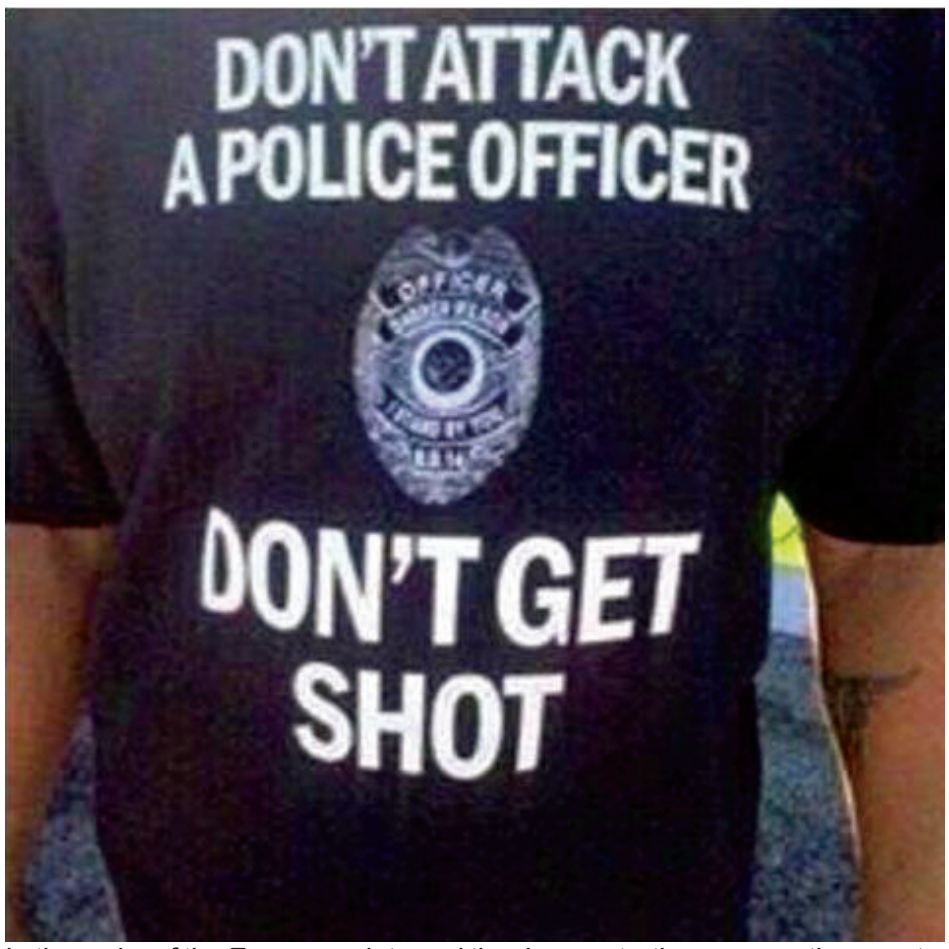
TD Bank recently sent players from the St. Monica School girls basketball program to attend the Boston Celtics game at the TD Garden. The school was selected from the many non-profit group applicants by TD Bank in the region.



In the wake of the Ferguson riots and the demonstrations across the country driven by anti-police hysteria, this shirt says it all. Despite the political propaganda and the media distortions, hero Officer Darren Wilson shot his would be cop-killer in self-defense, after Michael Brown attacked him in his police cruiser. The science and the physical evidence shows that Brown attacked Officer Wilson in his cruiser, tried to shoot him with his own gun and was charging at the officer when he was killed.

Methuen has a new Hookah Lounge at 224 East St. called Elixir Hookah Lounge. Owner Neilish Patel says he is excited to be serving the pepole of Methuen and the Merrimack Valley.

40th anniversary celebration for Athenian Corner Restaurant in Lowell. Above are Teddy Panos of 980WCAP and the Athenian Corner, Lowell Mayor Rodney Elliott, presenting the key to the city to Teddy's dad Steve Panagiotopoulos, his mom Alexandra Panagiotopoulos and his sister Thea Panagiotopoulos.

VALLEY PATRIOT PEOPLE OF THE YEAR! MARKET BASKET EMPLOYEES!

If anyone deserves to be named Person (or People) of the Year it's the dedicated employees of Market Basket! From the guys who stock the shelves to the gal at the meat counter to the truck drivers and cashiers, the employees of Market Basket stood up for Artie "T" and forced what many thought impossible - the departure of Artie "S" and the full control of Market Basket in the hands of Artie "T". As loyal Market Basket shoppers, the Valley Patriot wants to thank Artie "T" but even more importantly the army of loyal employees who helped save Market Basket as our More for your Dollar supermarket! Pictured above with State Rep Diana DiZoglio (2nd from left) are: (L-R) Manny Ma of Lowell, Angel Porter of North Andover, Ken Mercer of Tewksbury and Carolina Agudealo of South Lawrence all from the North Andover Market Basket store.

Lawrence residents Zakery Goulet (15) and Chloe Goulet (8) took advantage of the snow last week and built themselves a patriotic snowman worthy of The Valley Patriot's attention.

Police Academy Graduation Friday Puts Six New Officers on the Streets Monday

Last month, six police recruits were sworn in as Lawrence police officers after their Police Academy graduation in Lowell. Their graduation put them to work for Lawrence starting Monday, November 17th. "This is a big deal for our community," said Mayor Dan Rivera. "Making our streets safer is a priority, and having 6 new officers on the street is a step in the right direction for Lawrence."

State Rep. Linda Dean Campbell (D-METHUEN) with Myra Ortiz of the Lawrence School Committee, State Rep. Diana DiZoglio (D-Methuen) and Methuen City Councilor Lisa Ferry at Tekilas Mexican Restaurant on Merrimack Streeet in Methuen.

Haverhill Mayor Jim Fiorentini, Fitchburg Mayor Lisa Wong, Gloucester Mayor Carolyn Kirk and Lawrence Mayor Dan Rivera.

The North Andover Santa Parade went right by the Valley Patriot office on Main Street as it does every year. We were thrilled to see Title Boxing Club in North Andover (titleboxingclub.com) with a display in the parade. WE LOVE TITLE! See their ad on page 4.

Fox News 6m ago
BREAKING NEWS: No indictment of NYPD officer in chokehold death
slide to view
CNN now
No indictment for white New York police officer in chokehold death of unarmed black man.
slide to view

How certain "news" channels like CNN promote racial hatred and incite civil unrest by injecting race into conflicts where there is no evidence of racial motives whatsoever.

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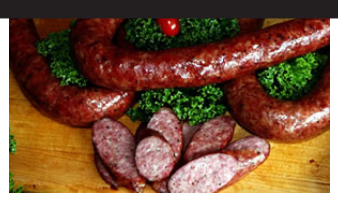

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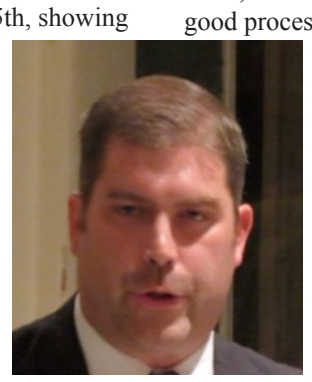
Kelcourse Wins Recount of 1st Essex State Rep. Race by 12 Votes

Amesbury City Councilor James Kelcourse has held on to his razor thin lead in the 1st Essex State Rep. race recount that wrapped up December 5th, showing Keclourse, the Republican, defeating Newburyport Democrat Ed Cameron by 12 votes in a five way race that included three Independents. The 1st Essex State Rep. District is comprised of Newburyport, Amesbury, and Salisbury.



Kelcourse was initially declared the winner on Election Day by 10 votes, but Democrat Cameron called for a recount of all three communities.

After a full recount of the votes, Kelcourse picked up two votes finalizing his lead to a 12 vote win. Kelcourse will take office in January.

"I'm looking forward to representing the people of the 1st Essex District, I'm excited," Kelcourse told The Valley Patriot after the recount win. "Ed Cameron called me and conceded last night. It was a very upbeat, positive conversation; he was a complete gentleman as he was through this entire campaign. When 17,268 ballots are cast and 10 votes separate the candidates, it's completely reasonable to have a recount and make sure that every vote is counted."

"It was interesting to watch that process work," Kelcourse continued. "It was a good process. I can't think of a more transparent process than the process during this election recount. Every clerk involved was above board, it was well run in all three communities."

The Massachusetts Republican Party Chairman Kristen Hughes says Kelcourse won because of hard work.

"Three days of hand recounts in Newburyport, Salisbury and Amesbury have confirmed Republican James Kelcourse won the election for State Representative from the 1st Essex District by 12 votes on November 4th.'On behalf of the Massachusetts Republican Party, I would like to congratulate Representative-elect James Kelcourse on his victory. Throughout this campaign season, Mr. Kelcourse worked hard to spread his message and to win every vote,' said Kirsten Hughes, MassGOP chairman. "Ultimately he won because he ran a positive, issues-based campaign that resonated with the people in the border communities of the 1st Essex District. He is a terrific addition to Beacon Hill and I know he will serve his constituents well."

Liberty and Justice for More

Robert Ehrlich, Alex Talcott
VALLEY PATRIOT GUEST COLUMNISTS

Jobs-and-the-economy has been the number-one polled issue for Americans for some time, with post-9/11 terrorism the only real break since the first Clinton's first presidential campaign. The Ferguson grand jury changed the conversation. It has sparked some of those overdue bigger-picture conversations on race, criminal justice, and civil society that were last credibly called for in the presidential context by Senator Bill Bradley's 2000 Democratic primary campaign. (President Obama's 2008 Reverend Wright speech in Philadelphia stopped short of a reform agenda.) To that national and New Hampshire conversation, we offer voices for – and some examples of – real reforms in criminal justice.

The president's nomination of a new attorney general captured the attention of the political class more so as a successor to the embattled Eric Holder than the story of nominee Loretta Lynch in her own right. Notorious for the Operation Fast and Furious gun-running sting, dropping a DOJ civil suit over New Black Panther Party voter intimidation, and his "nation of cowards" remark, Holder has not received credit where due on Fox News or talk radio – or on MSNBC or anywhere in mainstream media for that matter – for his normalization of offender reentry.

The Crime Report, published by the John Jay College of Criminal Justice's Center on Media, Crime and Justice in New York, noticed the October meeting arranged by the AG Office's "Interagency Reentry Council" that included eight formerly incarcerated offenders who are now civic leaders. Among the attendees was the post-PC Glenn Martin, who did six years for robbery, exiting Attica in 2000 to accrued child support with interest. This year he founded JustLeadershipUSA, which aims to accelerate "decarceration" with a "dedicat[ion] to cutting the U.S. prison population in half by 2030 while reducing crime" (emphasis added) by "empower[ing] the people most affected by incarceration [families and communities] to drive policy reform." There was a tony Tribeca rooftop launch last month, but it's a thoughtful cause. Moral and emotional high grounds are often inappropriate when addressing social deviance that has risen to criminality where one in four Americans have a criminal record (The National Law Project) and presidents have committed likely felony drug offenses.

In Maryland, I authored and passed the "Project Diversion" legislation that created a unique state-structured incarceration-alternative system for prosecutors of nonviolent offenses through "nolle prosequi for drug or alcohol treatment" or "stet for drug or alcohol treatment." Prosecutors appreciate constructs that reinforce that they are employed by taxpaying citizens to seek justice first, not simply convictions. Social workers appreciate tabling cases on stet, or inactive, dockets in recognition of limited treatment facilities and resources. Such innovation even made a fan of hip-hop mogul Russell Simmons (a former detractor) who appreciated Project Diversion as a "commitment to communities" by the Bob Ehrlich-Michael Steele ticket and administration.

My tenure as governor also saw the implementation of Project RESTART (Reentry Enforcement Services Targeting Addiction, Rehabilitation, and Treatment) in a number of Maryland prisons. Our Administration was willing to invest more in correctional education, substance abuse treatment, social work, and offender reentry, based on exhaustive studies establishing the importance of cognitive restructuring programs, academic and vocational skills training, and treatment in reducing recidivism.

There are also straight-up circumstances where clemency is right and just. As governor, I granted and denied hundreds of pardon petitions, putting considerable resources behind so-called "cold" cases where justice was not served. I also reversed my predecessor's blanket policy of refusing to consider lifer cases for clemency per a State Commission on Criminal Sentencing Policy that endorsed case-by-case analysis. The bottom line: some behind bars are innocent, some are serving disproportionate sentences for their roles in incidents, and some by their very being

MORE: PAGE 29

Top Ten Reasons Manchester, NH is a Great Place to Work and Live

Justess Jacobson
MANCHESTER, NH COLUMNIST

I have lived in Manchester since I was 8 years old. I didn't appreciate it at the time, but it truly was a great choice. Even though there are some down sides, I still realized that it truly is a great place to live. Here are the top ten reasons why

10. Highways everywhere! Interstates 93, 293, and Route 101 all run through Manchester. No matter where you are in the city, you are never more than ten minutes away from a highway at anytime.

9. Location. Much like previously mentioned, when you're close to a highway you are close to traveling anywhere. Being 45 minutes from the seacoast, 45 minutes from the mountains, and 45 minutes from Boston, there is never a lack of places to go.

8. Nightlife. I know, I know, there is no decent strip club in Manchester, but there isn't a good one in NH anyway. However, we do have plenty of nightlife clubs that are great to socialize, and meet people with common interests. They are all closely located and easy to walk to for a great night of bar hopping. With the new arrival of "Uber" it makes this perk much more...perkier.

7. Manchvegas Alerts. This Facebook group sounds kind of stupid, but the amount of good, and sense of community that comes from it is astounding. The page is run by a mother who listens to the police scanner, and alerts what is going on in the city: school closings, road closings, and other important information for the locals. She also adds in some contests and prizes. One of the greatest perks of this page is when something happens, to you or to someone else, everyone is willing to come together and help each other out. Someone steal your car? Lost your dog? Have a fundraiser that you want to get the word out? This is the community page to go to. It is awesome during emergencies and even power outages. When she can't be on the scanner, other people will post to the page and post pictures. Finally, social media has done something right.

6. Living. There are so many opportunities to look around for housing, both temporary and permanent. Need an apartment while you save for a house? Not a great income, a couple of kids? Housing in Manchester is relatively cheap, and even in the "scariest" of neighborhoods, for the most part, they leave you alone unless you wronged the wrong person.

5. The Skyline, the beauty, the adventures that happen all around you everyday. I used to go for runs (when I tried the whole weight loss thing) and there were some absolutely beautiful walks I'd go for. *INSERT PICTURES HERE* The city itself is absolutely breathtaking.

4. Entertainment. The Verizon Wireless Arena for one, keeps Manchester

MANCHESTER: PAGE 25

"Revenue Estimates: the Most Important Legislative Battle of 2015"

DJ Bettencourt
VALLEY PATRIOT NEWBURYPORT COLUMNIST

This month, the newly elected members of the New Hampshire Legislature officially took office. Despite most of the attention focusing on legislative leadership battles and a shocking upset in the Speaker of the House race, the most important battle of the 2015-2016 legislative session is likely to be far less glamorous: revenue estimates.

As such, I have updated a column from a few years ago on the same topic. Simply defined, revenue estimates are the formal estimate of how much will be earned from a specific revenue source within a period of time. These estimates should take into account current economic trends or specific events that might affect revenues.

The importance of revenue estimates in the formation of a state budget is analogous to the story of the two homebuilders in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. The first man chose to build on sandy soil that was easier and faster to build but left him with a weak foundation. As a result, when the first storm struck, the house was immediately destroyed. Conversely, the other man built his house on rock which, while much harder, provided a solid foundation and remained strong no matter how fierce the storm. This story is insightful to revenue estimates.

Like all states, New Hampshire's biennial budget is built on revenue estimates. Our recent history resembles those homebuilders. State budgets that are built on responsible revenue estimates, such as the 2012-13 budgets will endure for two years without deficits even during economic storms. Conversely, budgets built on manipulated revenue estimates based on wishful thinking, such as the 2007-2011 state budgets, will result in immediate monthly deficits. A brief history and comparison of these budgets is appropriate to serve as a warning of what we might expect from House Democrats as they project revenue for the 2015-16 budgets.

Governor Lynch's 2008-2009 budgets relied on overinflated revenues of $4.9 billion at a time when agency estimates anticipated revenues of $4.6 billion, a difference of $276 million. Legislative Democrats accepted those unsustainable estimates in support of the state's first $10 billion budget despite being much higher than economic forecasts supported.

After only three months of the budget cycle, the deficit reached $21.5 million. Then the 2008 recession struck. Suddenly,

REVENUE: PAGE 25

More Salisbury Residents Say They Paid Betterment "Fraud"

Salisbury Residents Come Forward with More Stories of Salisbury's Water and Sewer Fee Nightmares

For the last year and a half The Valley Patriot has been investigating the way the Town of Salisbury charges rate payers for construction projects - sewer betterments, sewer user fees, water fees, taxes on property, and exactly how much tax and at what rate payers were supposed to pay.

In October of 2013, we published a story about Gracemarie and Joyce Tomaselli who had been suing the town for almost two decades over what they called a fake betterment. They say that not only did the town charge the rate payers a $7.8M betterment for a new sewer treatment plant and the sewer system, but that the MA Department of Environmental Protection, the US Department of Agriculture and the US EPA paid the town 100% of the project.

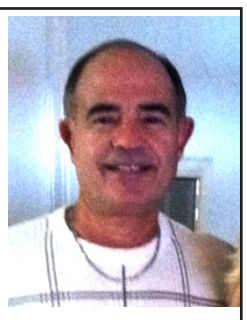
According to documents provided by the Town of Salisbury, Town Manager Neil Harrington has spent more than $100K in legal fees defending the town from the Tomaselli's lawsuits over the fake sewer betterment. The documents provided by Harrington only covered from 2005 to June of this year.

The Tomasellis have lost their cases but have filed an appeal, as well as a federal court case that is still working it's way through the court system.

PROPERTY OWNERS ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT: WE WERE CHARGED TOO MUCH

Tom Saab, President of the Salisbury Beach Citizens for Change (SBCFC) and property owner on North End Blvd. says he was told that the government grants would not cover the entire sewer project costs. He says he was told that the beach owners would be charged a betterment of $2,500 per unit and would be placed on the tax bills as a lien at 8% interest. Saab says he disputed and debated the issue with the town, but to no avail.

In September 2013, Manager Neil Harrington attacked Saab and SBCFC for sharing an email about the Tomaselli's claims against the town. Harrington renounced Saab and SBCFC during the televised Selectmen Meeting that Salisbury residents disassociate themselves with the SBCFC.



"…it appears they actually may have charged over $7,000,000 in betterment fees, I was always under the impression that the number of units was always in the 2,000 range. Unfortunately, with the Town of Salisbury, when it comes to revealing true and accurate data, it is difficult to obtain." **~ SBCFC President and Property Owner, Tom Saab**

Tom Saab also expressed concern that the town is charging for sewer user fees in violation of the federal grant conditions. To comply with the federal grant conditions, the town agreed and voted to charge residents based on their actual water usage to determine sewer user fees, but Saab says the town is not doing this.

Documents from one of the Tomaselli's lawsuits show an email from Saab saying that rate payers in Salisbury were not charged correctly for the sewer betterment also complaining that Salisbury officials are not transparent with town documents and public information.

"Well, we were told that the town's share of the $18,000,000 sewer project would be 10%, so do the math. 10% would only have been $1,800,000 yet they charged us approximately $5,000,000. Although, it appears they actually may have charged over $7,000,000

SALISBURY: PAGE 31

Newburyport Guide.com

The Season of Giving

Rebeccah Pearson
VALLEY PATRIOT NEWBURYPORT COLUMNIST

As the holidays fast approach us and the season of giving is now here, and for those that find ourselves looking for nonprofit organizations to lend a helping hand, sometimes we find that more difficult than easy. So I have compiled a list of some great organizations right here in the Greater Newburyport area that could always use a little love this holiday season. Each one of these are a nonprofit which means that they rely on IN KIND donations to help them in their cause … to help those that truly need assistance.

The Link House in Newburyport. The Link House is a rehabilitation treatment program for men. They are a non-profit organization founded in 1972, that has successfully served more than 5,000 men with their substance abuse recovery programs. Because they are a nonprofit and a recovery program, The Link House always is in need of coats, sweaters, jackets, boots and gloves for the winter months or a Visa Gift Card or gift cards to Walmart or Kmart. They can supply you with a list of all sizes needed for their 18 residents they have so there can be something under the tree to open up. Holidays are hard, and most come from homeless backgrounds and have no family to visit on the holidays. So a little cheer and some holiday love from the community is always welcome. For more information on how you can help, please contact The Link House at 978-462-7341 Monday-Friday from 9am-5pm. They are located at 37 Washington Street, Newburyport, MA 01950.

The Pettengill House in Salisbury. The Pettengill House, Inc. supports and empowers children and families by providing education, comprehensive case management and basic needs, and by coordinating community supports that contribute to individual and family stabilization, personal growth and development. Pettengill believes that individual and family stabilization is best achieved by identifying the level of need both individually and as a family unit, and addressing said needs "one step at a time". Our primary concerns are the most basic human needs of food, clothing, shelter, health and safety. Household items most often needed by Pettengill House clients include: beds and frames of all sizes, furniture, and appliances/kitchen items such as washing machines, dryers, refrigerators, microwaves, pots and pans. For more information on the Pettengill House please visit them at www.pettengillhouse.org.

The Progress House in Amesbury. The Progress House provides a safe, sober, supportive and therapeutic environment, which empowers men in their recovery. The ultimate goal is to help them transition into independent living while remaining abstinent from drugs and alcohol. They are a nonprofit organization as well and rely on IN KIND Donations. To make a donation to the Progress House, please contact them at 978-834-0088.

Feline Rescue Society: MRFRS was founded in 1992 in response to growth in the feral or homeless cat population along the Merrimack River in Newburyport. The MRFRS began a trap, neuter, and return (TNR) program for these cats in 1992 with feeding stations where the cats are fed twice a day. In 2009, Zorro, the last feral cat from the colony, passed away. In 2010, we assisted cats in need in over 100 towns in Massachusetts and New Hampshire. In our service area towns (Salisbury, Newburyport, Amesbury, Newbury, Byfield, West Newbury, MA and Seabrook, NH) we operate in a largely "kitten-free" zone and therefore we assist other communities in need of assistance with placing kittens. We are an open-admission, no-kill facility for our service area towns for kittens and adult cats. With your help, we can continue our innovative programs designed to help homeless and needy cats and kittens, providing them with a variety of services, from much-needed medical care and spay/neuter services to shelter, food, and loving new homes. For more information on their program visit them online at www.mrfrs.org or send your donation to MRFRS Headquarters 63 Elm Street (Rt. 110) Salisbury, MA 01952.

GIVING: PAGE 23

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FROM PAGE 1: Methuen Exchange Club Honors Local Heroes

ing the airway just enough to breathe. However, the responders recognized that the victim's shallow breathing required additional medical treatment, and quickly transported her to a nearby hospital where she required emergency surgery to remove the piece of steak.

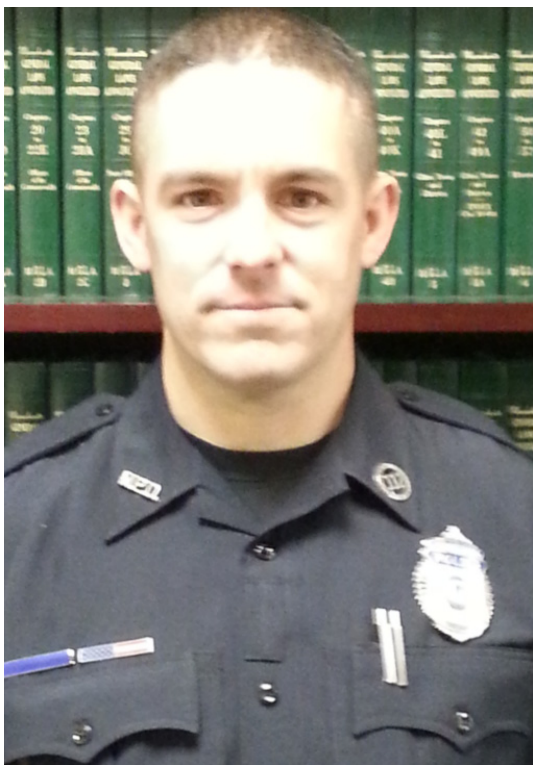
FIREFIGHTERS OF THE YEAR – ADAM SULIVERAS, JESSIE KATTAR

Both recipients (Adam Suliveras and Jessie Kattar) were nominated by the Chief and Superior Officers for actions or services above and beyond the call of duty.

A firefighter since 2005, currently assigned to Engine-1 at the Central Fire Station, Adam Suliveras. Adam graduated from North Shore Community College with an Associate Degree in Science for Fire Protection and Safety Technology. He also holds a variety of certifications: Firefighter levels I & II from Massachusetts Fire Training Council, National Emergency Medical Technician, Telecommunications, Emergency Medical Dispatch, Stress Identifications & Management, Hazardous Materials at both Recognition and Operational levels.

Jessie Kattar is currently assigned to Ambulance-2 at the Central Fire Station. Jessie graduated from the Massachusetts Firefighting Academy, he has earned and currently holds a variety of certifications: Firefighter levels I & II, Massachusetts and National Emergency Telecommunications and Emergency Medical Dispatch, Hazardous Materials at both Recognition and Operational levels.

POLICE OFFICER OF THE YEAR – JOE RYNNE



The distinguished Police Officer of the year is Joseph L. Rynne Jr., a lifetime resident of Methuen who now serves the community. Joseph is a patrolmen, and 12 year veteran of the police force, and graduate of Northern Essex Community College and the University of Massachusetts Lowell with degrees in Criminal Justice. A Tenney St Park Youth Basketball Coach and referee with several other officers for the last 12 years, he continues to be a positive role model and leader. The league is run as a partnership with the Methuen Police Department and the Methuen Arlington Neighborhood (MAN) Inc. Joseph is also an active member: of the Police Special Operations Unit (SOU), North Eastern Massachusetts Law Enforcement Council (NEMLEC), and the Regional Response Team (RRT).

SO PROUDLY WE HAIL AWARD – JOE STERNER, DELUCA FENCE COMPANY

So Proudly We Hail is a unique award given to both an individual, and a business who shows an act of Americanism, in this case proudly and properly displaying the American Flag on a regular basis. This year's recipients are Joesph Sterner and the DeLucca Fence Company, Inc.

Joseph took it upon himself to reach out to the Methuen Firefighters about buying them a new flag pole and flag. Joseph, procured the materials and even made arrangements for it to be installed. His decision to do this was because he thought that the flag displayed was too small, and should be larger especially for the men and women who serve our community and country.

DeLucca Fence Company, Inc. was founded by life-long residents of Methuen. The company is the largest contractor in New England and specializes in the installation of highway guard rails and fencing. Barbara DeLucca –Rae and Janet DeLucca accepted the award on behalf of the company. Their father, Salvatore DeLucca was a World War II Veteran and proudly flew the American Flag at his home, so it was only fitting that after they completed renovations and the expansion to their offices and maintenance facilities that the flag be flown in his honor.

BOOK OF GOLDEN DEEDS AWARD: JUDY SCANNELL

The Book of Golden Deeds is awarded to a person who distinguishes themselves in the community for selfless service over a lengthy period of time. This award was presented to Judith A. Scannell, whose career has been dedicated to educating the children of Methuen in a variety of capacities over her 39 years of service. Judith started out as a Kindergarten teacher at the Marsh Grammar School in 1975. She taught various grade levels throughout the CGS, Tenney, Timony, and the Marsh Grammar Schools until 1995 when she was appointed Curriculum Specialist and District Wide Gifted and Talented Facilitator for the Grammar Schools. In 2002, Judith was appointed Supervising Principal of the Tenney, in 2007 appointed as the Supervising Principal of the Timony, and in 2009 was appointed Supervising Principal of both Tenney and Timony Grammar schools. In 2010 Judith was hired as the Superintendent of Methuen Public Schools, and continues to thrive as a positive role model and leader for not only the students, but the teacher's alike in a challenging field.

It was truly a privilege for the Methuen Exchange Club to honor Adam Suliveras, Jessie Kattar, Joseph L. Rynne Jr., Joseph Sterner, DeLucca Fence Company Inc., and Judith Scannell for all that they do for the community and hope that others recognize their efforts as well. If you would like additional information on the National Exchange Club (how to become a member, or where to donate) please visit https://www.nationalexchangeclub.org/ or https://www.facebook.com/pages/Methuen-Exchange-Club/290580137870

Methuen Exchange Club is the oldest service organization operating in the United States. It was originally started as a way for business people to "exchange" ideas. The club is known for sponsoring activities throughout the community that promote Americanism, crime prevention, prevention of child abuse, as well as serving senior citizens, recognizing the military and other public safety service providers, and awards several scholarships to seniors.

Jennifer Jones was born and raised in Methuen. She is an active member of the community who participates in many events and activities, as well as belongs to a social club that benefit the community. Jennifer obtained a degree from Northern Essex Community College in 2008 for an Associate in Arts General Studies, and most recently graduated Northeastern University in 2014 with a Bachelor of Science in Finance and Accounting Management.

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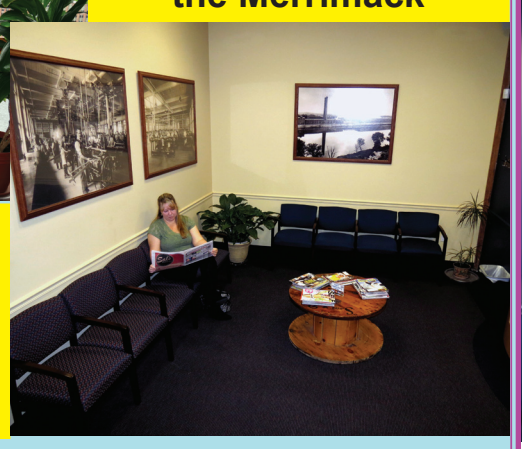

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One Tail at a Time Dog of the Month

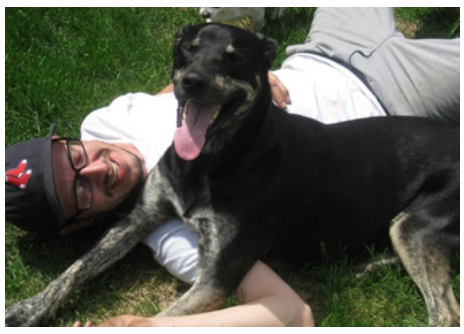
To say that Baxter is a One Tail at a Time "Rescue Favorite" is an understatement. Many of One Tail's volunteers, transporters, over-nighters and southern shelter workers still keep up with Baxter and his adventures on his very own Facebook page. Here is what his "Mom" Sarah and "Dad-Man" Matt had to say about this awesome dog who we all love so very much!

Everyday we ask ourselves, "How did we get so lucky finding Baxter?"

We're pretty sure Baxter feels the same way about us, because from day one it was just big, true love all around! Baxter is one of the most joyful, friendliest, happy-go-lucky dogs we have ever met, and he has loads of human and canine friends. He wins everyone over with his big goofy smile, his hugs and his cuddliness.

Despite the fact that he weighs almost 80 pounds, he thinks everyone wants to hold him in their lap and hug him - and after being around him for a few minutes, most people actually do! Everyday Baxie wakes us up with enthusiastic nudges and kisses, because he just can't wait to get up and go to work.

He is the resident "shop dog" at the Up-pababy warehouse, where his "dad-man" Matt works. His best friend Mona, a Corgi-mix, also works there, and they greet each delivery driver at the door with wagging tails. We're convinced they think these guys come there solely to deliver them cookies! At home Baxter loves to run around his big backyard and play Frisbee, chase rabbits, and run with and chase the many neighborhood



dogs who stop by to play. At the end of the day, he likes nothing more than curling up in the chair or on the couch with his people and his big sister Roxy the chihuahua. Baxter also loves to have sing-alongs, (his howling abilities are quickly becoming infamous), go for walks, hikes and trips to the dog park, make new human and canine friends everywhere he goes, bury bones, and dig in the garden.

Sometimes we see him just gleefully running around the yard, tossing a stick in the air and howling with delight! We are thankful everyday for this lovely, kind, fun, spunky, joyful dog, who will gently place both front paws on your shoulders and pull you in for a one-of-a-kind doggy hug if he sees you sitting in a chair or on the floor. He has the sweetest disposition and the most positive attitude, and he brings so much happiness into our lives. It was a match made in Heaven!

One Tail at a Time Rescue, Inc. is a registered approved non-profit rescue with the state of MA. We are a 100% volunteer based organization. onetailatatime.com

Holiday Safety Tips for Your Pets

Tracey Zysk
VALLEY PATRIOT DOGGIE COLUMNIST

Christmas, Hanukkah and ringing in the New Year are always filled with joy and excitement. However, it comes with over excitement and some obstacles for our pets. Keeping your furry friends safe during the holidays must be on your list of " to do's".

There are the ornaments, plants, presents, lights and tons of fun things for our sneaky ones to get themselves into. And let's not forget the Christmas tree, guarantee to be knocked over at least once in your household!

Please review the following reminders this holiday season to help prevent a trip to the veterinary emergency room:

1. Christmas tree: Place your tree in a corner, blocked off from your pet's immediate view. This will help prevent a cat from jumping on a tree and a dog from knocking it over. Let's keep your tree looking beautiful and prevent your pet from getting hurt.

2. Tinsel: Keep it at the top or higher levels of your tree. Cats love to play with these sparkly "string toys" but it can be quite deadly to a cat if ingested causing an internal blockage.

3. Lights: Don't place lights on the lower level of the tree or below the lowest branch. Your pet may get tangled in the lights and choke or even get shocked.

4. Ornaments: These are probably the biggest danger to your pets. Your dog doesn't understand it isn't a ball and your cat wants to swat at it endlessly for hours. Ornaments may injure paws, mouths, or other parts of your pet's body.

5. Live Christmas tree: Keep the area free and clear of pine needles. While they may not seem dangerous, the needles can puncture your pet's intestines if ingested. Also please remember to keep your tree watered to prevent a fire.

6. Burning candles: They should be placed on high shelves or mantels, out of your pet's way -- A dog tail's wagging or a cat jumping could cause an accidental fire if the candle is knocked over. Homes with fireplaces should use screens to avoid accidental burns and to keep your pets away from the fire.

7. Outdoor decorations. Keep wires taped to the wall or the sides of the house.

8. The BIG day: When unwrapping gifts, be sure to keep your pet away. Wrapping paper, string, plastic, or cloth could cause intestinal blockages. Scissors are another hazard, and they should be kept off floors or low tables.

A few minutes of preparing your home properly for your pets will prevent injury during the holiday season.

Have a Happy and Safe Holiday Season and don't forget to spoil your pets!

Tracey Zysk, owner of Wiggles & Jiggles Pet Care in North Andover MA is a local pet care professional. She has been featured on local radio, TV and newspapers educating the general public on animal care and animal health & wellness. Tracey is a proud supporter of Police, Fire & Military K9 units and National Award winner of the Platinum PAW award. Tracey may be reached at wigglewalk@comcast.net. Become a fan on Facebook at Wiggles & Jiggles Pet Care.

LAWRENCE: FROM PAGE 14

the Personnel Dept. during Michael Sullivan's administration as a "provisional" appointment. I wonder who recommended her? I have a letter in my possession from the Personnel Dept. dated December 27, 2007. We don't know who authored this letter, but this is an example of the work coming out of the Personnel Dept. during Ms. Ortega's tenure.

The first sentence is "Your union has exercised its bumping rights associated with layoff that are to take effect on December 31, 2007." We can only hope that this was produced by a provisional employee that did not get hired permanently, but what are the chances of that?

It seems that Bonilla, Esquea and Ortega all got their positions by precisely the methods that some of the councilors are now complaining about.

They claim that supporters of William Lantigua are being unfairly discriminated against. If so, how do they explain the pay raise of Lantigua supporter Raul Batistine, who recently moved from Administrative Assistant in Inspectional Services to Housing Code Inspector?

If the purpose of the upcoming discussion is to flesh out the exact scope of mayoral powers and how to best prevent future abuse, we have many spectacular instances of Mayor Lantigua overstepping his authority, far too many to mention in this article.

At the very least we must understand the subtle distinctions that made Mayor Lantigua's acts permissible and Mayor Rivera's acts an overstepping of authority.

Any investigation that only looks at the actions of Mayor Rivera is a witch hunt at best.

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TEEN TALK WITH ANA DEBERNARDO

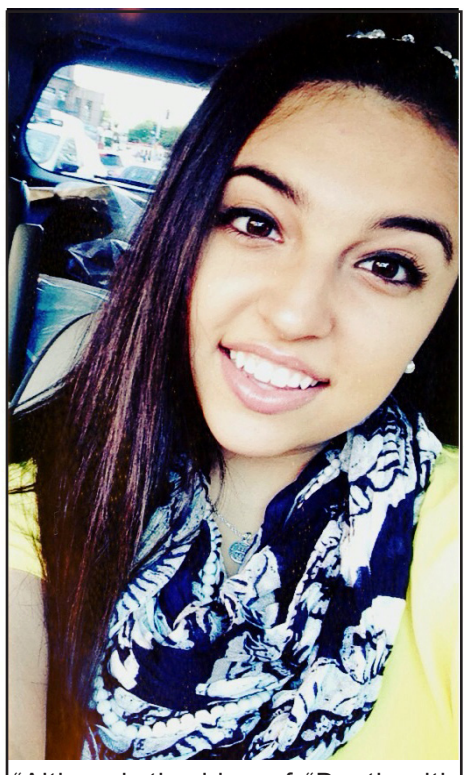
Death Without Dignity

One of the strongest arguments for physician assisted suicide is the idea of "Death with Dignity." People claim that their life is theirs and only theirs, and that no one should have the right to decide when to end it but them.

If a man is diagnosed with a terminal illness and is given only six months to live, an advocate of "death with dignity" would argue that it should be his choice whether or not to keep living with the knowledge that his metaphoric timer is ticking faster and faster each day. After all, who is the world to ask anything more of him if his desire is to cut his life shorter than it already has been cut for him? Does that make his loved ones selfish for wanting him to suffer his final six months? If so, would he really want his family's final memories of him to be an emaciated and weak version of him? All these questions are seemingly valid points when their counter arguments have not yet been brought to light.

The Death with Dignity Act would allow people with less than six months to live to receive a prescription for a fatal substance, allowing them to commit suicide at the time of their choosing and in the privacy of their home. Brittany Maynard, a 29 year-old woman from Portland, Oregon became the public advocate for this controversial "right-to-die movement" last month. "Goodbye to all my dear friends and family that I love. Today is the day I have chosen to pass away with dignity in the face of my terminal illness", she published on her Facebook.

Maynard's doctors gave her the six-month life expectancy after she was diagnosed with stage 4 glioblastoma. After announcing her intention to take a fatal dose of barbiturates, prescribed to her by doctors under Oregon's Death with Dignity Act, Brittany made global headlines with her desire to end her suffering. On October 6th, Maynard launched a video campaign that promoted end-of-life choice, and to fight for the expansion of death-with-dignity laws nationwide. In an interview with People magazine, Brittany said, "For people to argue against this choice for sick people really seems evil to me. They try to mix it up with suicide and that's really unfair, because there's not a single part of me that wants to die. But I am dying."



"Although the idea of "Death with Dignity" promotes the decision to cut a life short, its true meaning could be something entirely different."

There are countless stories of patients whose illnesses have been dubbed terminal, but have either overcome their illness, or lived far beyond their given "time frames". It is a haunting thought to imagine losing a loved one through assisted suicide while a possibility existed that he or she might have conquered their disease, or at least lived a while longer. If there have been clear cases of misdiagnoses, then the question arises as to why this controversial and ethically questionable alternative is so heavily argued in society, instead of working to improve or find other solutions.

Although the idea of "Death with Dignity" promotes the decision to cut a life short, its true meaning could be something entirely different. Choosing to end your life simply because you don't want to wait until a date some doctor gave you, could even suggest cowardice. There is no question that some lives are harder than others. I am not saying that living life with a terminal illness would be an easy thing. Of course it will be painful and difficult, but that doesn't mean a person should cut their battle short. It's understandable for a person in this state to want to evade the suffering. Willingly

TEEN: PAGE: 23

BABIES AND BRIEFCASES

THE POWER OF GIVING

Cheryl Hajjar
VALLEY PATRIOT MOMMY COLUMNIST

It is better to give to then receive. We have all heard that popular saying before, but what does it really mean? The power of giving is in helping someone have a better day. Its an act of kindness, that feel good moment you experience commonly known as a "helper's high" when your feel good, oxytocin hormones get released. According to Boston College researchers, people who help out others have had neural responses on their MRI's. In their studies they found that people that have chronic pain and depression who volunteer experience a decrease in their symptoms after such activities have taken place. That's powerful.

When we are generous to others we are actually being generous to ourselves. Giving is infectious. Have you ever noticed that when you bring someone a coffee or help an elderly neighbor take out their garbage, you feel more positive for the rest of the day? I have. Your troubles seem lighter and you can tackle the best of issues with an increased thread of optimism.

Where does the power of the universe come into play here? Could there be a correlation between giving to others and the positive effect the universe may have on your life? Absolutely. The universe is an infinite plane of energy swirling around us everyday. It makes perfect sense that when you give to someone, or help them out in some way, the universe is taking that energy and giving it back to you, but do not give to get. Expecting something in return surely never works. Know that by truly giving selflessly, you are creating a positive karmic flow that will surely have a profound effect on your life.

If you look at the most successful people in the world, they all have one thing in common, they give back. Bill and Melinda Gates, Warren Buffet, and Barron Hilton all are mega philanthropists. Warren Buffett started an organization called givingpledge.org where some the wealthiest people around the world write pledge letters to help others in need whether it be an organization or a certain group of individuals. Some of the donors involved include Mark Zuckerberg and Sheryl Sandberg from Facebook, Richard Branson from Virgin, and Bill and Karen Ackerman, CEO and founder of Pershing Square Capital Management. They have truly harnessed what the power of giving means. At one point in all of their lives, someone helped them out, or believed in them enough to help them achieve success and they, in turn have given back. That's what it is all about. When someone helps you, always remember to pay it forward.

So what if you don't have deep pockets such as this group of wealthateers? There are hundreds of other ways to give back. Find a charity that you feel connected with and get involved. You can give a cash donation or donate your time at one of their local events. Lazarus House or one of the your local food pantries are always looking for volunteers, especially during the holiday season. Donate your children's clothing to Catiescloset.org, a children's charity who's mission is to clothe homeless children in the Merrimack Valley to keep them in school and finish their educations. Volunteer as a children's tutor or reading storytime at the library are other ways to give back. Donating your used items such as books and household items to organizations in need is also another way of giving. Why throw something out when it can be recycled and put to good use by a person in need. Even bringing gently used clothing to consignment shops is something I have done in the past. These are all examples of paying it forward in one way or another.

In the true spirit of giving this holiday season, I urge you all to try doing one random act of kindness a day, whether it be holding a door for someone, volunteering at your church, buying the person behind you in Dunkin Donuts drive thru their coffee, or even thanking a cashier after a purchase transaction and wishing them a

HAJJAR: PAGE: 23

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TEEN: FROM PAGE 22

keeping up a fight that's impossible to win doesn't sound remotely pleasant. People given a short amount of time to live often want to end their lives because they assume their deaths inevitable, but that's no different from the rest of the living world. Everyone is going to have to die at some point, and that is our true final destination. We don't have the right to decide when that moment comes.

Today's society completely neglects the potential to live, love and learn in the last moments of a person's life. Whether that be their final days, weeks, months, or even years, the idea of assisted suicide instead tells them that their life is worthless and that it would be easier on everyone if they would take a pill and die.

GIVING: FROM PAGE 19

Pennies for Poverty 2 Cents 4 Change INC: If everyone in Newburyport gave just two cents a day, two cans a month to the food pantries and two hours a month in volunteerism, the benefits to the community would total over $3,000,000. It's such a simple concept and can be applied in any town. This grass roots organization is innovative and energetic and making a big difference to those less fortunate. They have provided grants for local after school programs, emergency funds for local service agencies, food drives for the food pantries and supported many initiatives that would have fallen through the cracks. They have supplied extra funding to keep the local Meals on Wheels program running five days a week. For more information please visit them online at www.penniesforpoverty.org.

The Jeanne Geiger Crisis Center: The Jeanne Geiger Crisis Center is a nationally recognized leader in the effort to end domestic violence and provide care for victims. For over 30 years, we have been providing advocacy and support services to families and the communities within the Greater Newburyport area. Our mission is to empower members of our community to live free from fear, intimidation, violence or the threat of abuse by providing support, advocacy and education. The Center provides a 24-hour, seven-day-a-week crisis hotline, legal advocacy, emergency and transitional shelter, counseling and support to victims of domestic violence in the communities we serve. In 2013 alone, we helped more than 1,200 victims of domestic violence, both adults and children. For more information please visit www.jeannegeigercrisiscenter.org

Have a very Merry Christmas and a Happy Hanukkah! May the love and giving of the Holiday Season bring you much happiness. From my home to yours, be merry and love to you all.

HAJJAR FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

good day. Record how you feel right after performing the act and for the rest of that day. At the end of the week, reflect on how you felt, and how many smiles your kindness inspired. As Ebenezer Scrooge said in A Christmas Carol: I will honor Christmas in my heart and try to keep it all the year. We should all do the same.

Cheryl Hajjar is a lifelong resident of the Merrimack Valley. She keeps busy by fulfilling her duties as a mother to her young son. She is an entrepreneur and the CEO of Indigo Magic, an interactive children's company. One of her passions is music, songwriting and classical piano which she incorporates into all areas of her life. You can email her at babiesnbriefcases@gmail.com

Feeding the Crocodile

Forest Rain Marcia
VALLEY PATRIOT ISRAELI COLUMNIST

There is a new trend in Europe. Parliaments in various European countries are holding "symbolic votes" to "recognize the State of Palestine."

These votes are symbolic in that they don't have the power to create a Palestinian State. There is no state called "Palestine", and historically there is no such thing as "Palestinian People." The invention of the Palestinian people is, on the timeline of history, a very new thing and it's possibly the greatest marketing spin ever (it is certainly proof that if you say the same thing over and over, with enough vehemence, eventually people will believe anything).

The invention of a Palestinian people occurred for the same reason that Israel was twice called Palestine by conquering nations – to break the connection between the Land of Israel and the People of Israel.

The European governments voting to recognize Palestine as a state have said that their goal is to express their displeasure to Israel about the lack of progress in the "peace process" and in resolving the "Israeli-Palestinian conflict."

The conjunction of these "symbolic votes" with the wave of terror attacks Israel is experiencing illuminates their dishonesty.

Teenagers kidnapped and murdered on their way home from school, women and babies murdered while waiting for the busses and trains. Men murdered while praying in a synagogue. People stabbed while shopping for groceries. Police attacked. Public transportation attacked. Kindergartens attacked. Cars attacked. The list goes on and on but maybe, in the European mind, it is logical to blame the victims for the attacks on them – especially if they are Jews.

Winston Churchill, one of the greatest statesmen that ever lived, said "An appeaser is one who feeds a crocodile, hoping it will eat him last."

I believe this is the true motivation behind these votes. The European countries are feeding their local "crocodiles", hoping to be eaten last.

It won't work.

To the Swedes that have declared their recognition of "Palestine" – I declare that I recognize the Free State of Malmo and the other Swedish cities and areas that have submitted to the will of Allah and the growing Islamic State.

To the British that have declared their recognition of "Palestine" – I declare that I recognize the Islamic Emirates of Britain which currently include Birmingham, Bradford, Derby, Dewsbury, Leeds, Leicester, Liverpool, Luton, Manchester, Sheffield, as well as Waltham Forest in northeast London and Tower Hamlets in East London. May you enjoy the freedom of submission to Allah. I will encourage all British women saying, the hijab will give you freedom. The burqa is even better. This way your Muslim brothers will know that you are decent God-fearing women and that it is the kufar that should be raped, not you.

To the French that have declared their recognition of "Palestine" – I declare that I recognize the freedom of the Islamic Zones of France. Paris, Lyons, Marseilles or Toulouse won't change much under sharia rule, will they?

Sadly the list goes on. Spain, maybe Belgium next. In the Kuregem district of Brussels, police are forced to patrol the area with two police cars: one car to carry out the patrols and another car to prevent the first car from being attacked. In the

ISRAEL: PAGE: 25

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The Immigration Crises Will Get Worse

Joe D'Amore
VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

President Obama's intentions are commendable. However, the approach will not usher in immigration reform. Why? 1) He is using Executive Order instead of compromise and legislation to enforce reform. The ACLU applauded his actions but also warned all illegals that there is " no clear path" to legal status.

2) Judges and the courts are very reluctant to decide matters on Executive Orders, as they prefer laws and precedent setting case law.

Other than adding additional security forces on the border which is a prudent action; implementing measures to retain skilled workers, entrepreneurs and students - and then processing "illegals" who have been here 5 years, have not committed a crime and are willing to pay a fine is impossible to actually administer. Its as "impossible" as it is to deport millions.

Think of this; if you are an "illegal" and you learned of the president's announcement, where exactly would you go to seek a "path" to become legal ?

There is no dedicated office or "claims" process , no official form to fill out , no law to cite and so in keeping with the ACLU's advise, the only thing you could do is to approach a lawyer who might be able to help you come "out of the shadows" without running the risk of being deported or thrown in jail.

In the end, the vision is grand but the execution is utterly reckless.

The use of Executive Order instead of public debate, checks and balances and rule of law simply deepens the crises

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BUD LIGHT

Valley Patriot Columnist Paul Murano Hits the Bull's Eye

Michael Veves
READER SUBMISSION

Paul Murano's article in which he explains that putting faith that amounts to a sort of worship in elected officials will not solve our most deep rooted problems was excellent.

Setting up our politicians as 'saviors' is nothing new and has 'resonated' throughout history. A cult of personality or 'hero worship' seems to arise for the citizenry as our politicians adeptly use media, sloganeering, and propaganda to stir our emotions rather than our intellectual. Provoking our emotions is not only more titillating but far easier than appealing to our intellect. Thus, we walk wildly down the path of following strong armed people who seem to be of good will but are anything but. This is no more evident than what we see happen in countries weakened by blind obedience to fundamentalist religious doctrine or, the opposite, countries where the 'state' is all powerful.

Murano asks a number of poignant questions, seemingly, summed up in the question, 'Why/How can people of sound intellect fall for such manuvering?" After all, isn't it obvious what politicians are doing to us? Isn't it obvious that they are 'handled' by a small cadre? Isn't it obvious that attack ads are designed to stir us emotionally not intellectually? Is it because voters have never learned how to think abstractly? Perhaps, people simply don't want to analyze information before coming to a conclusion? Is it harder on our brains to explore what is told to us in a systematic fashion so that we can reach a rational conclusion?

Our most deep rooted problems of loneliness, conflicts between personal goals and community responsibilities, pursuing economic goals that compromise our humanity, need for family and group sharing are simply not going to be solved by a politician. Where does one go to find solace in the face of intangibles like justice, goodness, anger when all we are seeking is the 'pursuit of happiness....' As Murano writes, "Politicians cannot bring happiness because most human problems are not fixed by political situations." I have found in political campaigns people who are often seeking nothing more than camaraderie, an escape from loneliness, a longing for new friendships. Many feel a tremendous let down after a campaign because the sense of common goal they had with others seems to vanish. Many decide to make it a career for the need for human connection is so great.

We have great problems facing us, many of which cannot be solved by polticial solutions. Yet we keep circling around again and again with election after election seeking political solutions.For example, how will raising the minimum wage help when someone does not know how to budget? Or gains a $50/week increase only to blow it on one night at the movies rather than use that money to pay a bill? To buy his child some books? To take his child to see a live theater production? How will stronger gun laws help gun owners scoff at the laws and do all they can to circumvent them? Or gun lobbying groups intentionally lying to appeal, again, to our emotions resulting in a statement like "The US government wants to disarm you" when, indeed, the opposite is occurring. More people are 'armed' in the US than ever before, able to bring guns into cafes, churches, schools, you name it. How is it that we believe things that are not happening?

How do we make people become responsible for their own health insurance when they know they can go to any hospital emergency room, get emergency care, and leave the bill to you and I to pay? Laws are, indeed, necessary. But they seldom make the irresponsible suddenly become responsible.

Murano is right that there are 'false presumptions and false narratives that the media form in us, from our our youth.' Turn to Fox News, MSNBC, or CNN and just watch the false information pour out at you. With enough of it, you will believe it to be true. Fox News used to use the phrase 'fair and balanced.' It doesn't anymore. That's a step since it is hardly balanced and utterly unfair. Just look at how Ed Shultz talks about Republicans. Yet aficionados watch

MURANO: PAGE: 25

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REVENUE: FROM PAGE 18

a deficit projected at $50 million exploded to $138 million. By artificially increasing revenue projections to accommodate spending increases, Democrats began creating the largest financial crisis in state history. In 2009, revenues were off by a whopping 11.92% and overestimated by more than $300 million.

Ignoring the mistakes of the past, House Democrats, once again, chose to base their 2010-11 budget on revenues that were totally unrealistic given the state of the economy. The end result was another $57.7 million tacked on to the deficit. The deficit continued to balloon to $360 million in 2010 and earned New Hampshire the distinction of being the worst state at projecting revenue estimates by the Pew-Rockefeller Study of State Revenue Forecast Accuracy.

Regaining the legislature in 2011, Republicans took a different approach to revenue estimates for the 2012-2013 budgets. We decided to go the difficult route and ascertain the most accurate estimates before crafting the budget to know, in advance, how much we had to spend.

We were brutally honest with economic realities and when agency heads testified before the legislature we asked a simple question: "what are the most accurate revenues as though your job depended on it?" When then kept spending married to those accurate estimates.

Democrats accused us of intentionally lowering estimates to justify draconian spending cuts, yet our process produced estimates that were underestimated by a mere 0.3%.

Then there is the current (2014-2015) budget. Thanks to Republican Senate President Chuck Morse, revenue estimates have been extraordinarily accurate despite efforts by big spenders to manipulate them upward. Yet, this month, Governor Hassan was instructing her department heads to close a $75 million deficit. How did this happen? Because Hassan allowed her office and state agencies to spend beyond estimated revenues. This presents an even more basic economic principle, once you accurately know how much you have to spend, you can't spend more than you have.

For Hassan and her Democrats, the temptation again exists to manipulate revenue estimates or spend beyond those estimates.

It is always easier to spend than cut spending. It will be up to the Republican controlled legislature to ensure fiscal integrity and accurate revenue estimates that do produce massive deficits. The past must not be prologue.

D.J. Bettencourt served as a State Representative in the New Hampshire House of Representatives from 2005 to 2012 and was the House Majority Leader for the 2011-2012 legislative term. He currently works as the Director of Development and Community Relations at the Salem Animal Rescue League and serves on the Economic Development Action Committee in Salem, NH.

MURANO: FROM PAGE 24

these networks religiously.

In this emotional roller coaster, some of us decide to turn off, stop voting, stop watching what sometimes masquerades as 'news,' and and concentrate on our own needs. Others turn to religious faith, prayer where they feel they are able to turn off the 'noise.' Some people find solace in nature: it's why many of us take long walks along the beach during quiet season, why others jog long distances, why some climb mountains, why others spend hours at a hobby. These activities try to mend our 'heart' which aches for connection, the very thing, ironically, that may have brought us to hero worship of a political savior. When it doesn't happen, we, again, feel let down.

Is there a lesson Murano is trying to teach us? It seems so. He quotes from one of the greatest writers of the 20th century, C.S. Lewis,a man of profound intellect. We does one find 'heaven?" Maybe he finds it in serving his community. Perhaps he finds it in his art: painting, sculpting, writing, dancing, acting.

It could be in the world of nature: long distance bicycling, horse back riding, or a 20 mile walk for hunger. Maybe he finds it around the dinner table with a friend, companion, or spouse. Finally, he may find it in long periods of meditation or prayer.

Wherever one goes to fill the void, beware: is is probably not going to be found by worshiping a human being. For he or she is only that: a human being...and we are all imperfect.

*Michael Veves taught English and elementary school for 20 years, found it dissatisfying, and decided to become an equestrian. He gave over 15,000 horseback riding lessons before retiring and spends most of his time now with his dog*s.

ISRAEL: FROM PAGE 23

Molenbeek district of Brussels, police have been ordered not to drink coffee or eat a sandwich in public during the Islamic month of Ramadan.

In the Netherlands, a Dutch court ordered the government to release to the public a politically incorrect list of 40 "no-go" zones in Holland. The top five Muslim problem neighborhoods are in Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Utrecht.

The list goes on and on.

Recognizing Palestine is simply an attempt to appease and deflect local Islamic wrath. Unfortunately for the countries of Europe, putting the focus on Israel and Jews does not halt the creeping sharia that is taking over Europe.

Israel can be fed to the crocodiles but their hunger will not be assuaged.

The truth is, there is no "Israeli-Palestinian conflict". There is a conflict between Islam and all other religions and cultures. Israel and Jews are a convenient target because we are an island in a sea of Islamic nations. We are close. And our ideals directly appose theirs.

We are an example, not the cause. Placing the blame on us will not "save" anyone else.

Recognizing Palestine will not stop people like "Jihadi-John". Interesting that the British got so worked up over that British beheader and seem to have forgotten that Lee Rigby had his head chopped off in the streets of London, in broad daylight.

Recognizing Palestine will not stop the harassment non-Muslims are experiencing in France, Holland, Norway, Germany… It will not stop the violence against women or the attacks on police.

It will not stop bombings, stabbings and hijackings in the cities of Europe or the heartland of America.

The world has lost its head. Logic has left the building and there is no sign of it ever coming back.

Appeasing the bully never works. Blaming the victims is never right.

The Islamic State in Iraq and Syria is being spread with guns and bombs. It is much easier in Europe. Little violence is needed to convince Europeans to cede their countries and their culture. Creeping sharia is chomping huge bites out of Europe. Soon the "crocodiles" will swallow it completely.

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God Bless America

MANCHESTER: FROM PAGE 18

a tourist haven where there are many concerts, and sporting events. I have seen numerous concerts there that range from Jonas Brothers to Matchbox 20. I have seen numerous amounts of Monarchs games, and The Monster Jam. Seating is great, and for the most part, it's one of the cheaper venues. There are also places like The Palace Theatre, which is the oldest theatre in the city, dating back to 1913. It was also featured in the Syfy show "Ghost Hunters" as it has a haunted history.

3. Jobs. When the economy hit a low with the recent recession, the entire country was hit hard. New Hampshire actually had the lowest rate of laid off workers, and Manchester was part of that reason. There are always jobs available, and always room to build small business with our downtown district always leasing.

2. Healthcare. Manchester has two hospitals that are both leading in not only the state, but the country. Catholic Medical Center is known for it's cardiac care that has saved thousands of lives. Elliot Hospital, which is not only the second largest employer in the state (behind the education system), but it won the most wired award for healthcare three years in a row, has the top trauma center, an award winning cancer unit, and intensive care unit. With one located on either side of town, there is always medical help right away.

1. The Quality of life here is honestly great. That is why Manchester was ranked the Number 9th place to live in the country. The crime rate is relatively low, especially violent crimes. The economy is great, and getting better as we transform our historic mills into a budding technological capital, and the overall happiness and opportunities for families here. There are always local shops, contests, scouts, and other talents that come looking in the Manchester area. It's a clean city with a transportation system that works for everyone. The busses stop at every corner, and free rides during the harsh times of weather (in the summer, and dead of winter, the busses run free for anyone that needs a place to warm up or cool down).

As I said before, we look at Manchester and forget that it has history. The mill buildings still have areas that are reserved for historical tours, and museums that show the history of the Queen City. We have the Merrimack River that is a major part of the city that also has a past with severe flooding. Manchester isn't just great because I live here. It's great because people take pride in where we are, and take pride in living in this wonderful city that we call home.

Ye Gay Ol' Valley

I Am Not A Lesbian But I Have Some For Friends

Kathleen Laplante
VALLEY PATRIOT FILL-IN LESBIAN

Dani Langevin our lesbian columnist took the month off. Kathleen Laplante has decided to be our fill-in lesbian columnist.

Hi. I'm Kathleen Laplante. I am not a lesbian, but I thought I might be when I was in my 30's. When I was in my 40's, I fell in love with a gay guy. I didn't know he was gay when I fell in love with him, but he softly and kindly shared the information after I told him I had an interest in him. He was very sweet. He is the one who taught me the term SSA, Same Sex Attraction. That's the vocabulary he preferred to use.

When my oldest son was in grade school, we talked about homosexuality. I eventually asked him if he ever thought he was gay. In the most innocent of replies, he leaned up against me on the couch and said, "No." Then he paused and he said, "That would be harsh." I was amazed that he had that perspective at such a young age. I still have not learned what he was exposed to that he would say such a thing then. Speaking of young, when my younger son was a freshman in high school at a private school, he was told to sign up for a sex education class. My jaw almost dropped when he told me one evening that the teacher had a plastic model of a penis in erection on her desk, and she demonstrated how to put on a condom. f I condoned birth control, then that is something I would have rather done with him one on one.

I know many parents who would be pleased with that, but I am of the mindset that such education should be done by the parents at the appropriate maturity level for the child. For my part, I wish I could have pulled my son from the class, but I didn't even know about it. No notice was sent home. It's just a little dramatic and it can be shocking to see a larger than life size penis in the room. Pardon my going off on a tangent.

When my marriage was ending, a good female friend of mine told me about her divorce and her new life after it. She left her husband for another woman. She was still single when I knew her. I don't think legal marriage for gays and lesbians existed back then. She dated. She went into Boston to lesbian bars. As far as I know, she is still lesbian and still single. She used to tell me about struggles her and her partner had in the sex arena. Yes, I was a bit uncomfortable. I mean, I didn't share about my sex life with my husband with her, or with these other two gay guys who partnered together. It seemed that at every gathering, i.e., appetizers and wine, a picnic, dinner, etc., they got explicit about their sexual encounters. I never understood why.

How do we blend these two communities? How do we learn and grow from our differences to coexist lovingly?

I don't have an answer. Not yet, anyhow. I'm just thinking out loud. And I just thought about the Catholic Church. Wow. Such a dichotomy from the gay and lesbian community. The Church teaches that homosexuality is a perversion and should therefore not be acted upon (my wording, not theirs). No living together (although the Church doesn't condone that for single heterosexuals either); no sex; and no adopting children. But they are welcome in church, at Masses, in choirs, and such, at any time. They are even welcome to receive Communion – as long as they follow the guidelines implemented worldwide for everyone. Unfortunately, those living an active gay lifestyle don't meet the guidelines and cannot receive Jesus, Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity in the Eucharist. My heart is heavy when I think about this deprivation, a deprivation I experienced when I was a non-Catholic. I fully support it based on Church teachings about Jesus, but my heart is heavy for those involved.

My gay friend (the guy with SSA) is now dating a woman… I know her. She's quite nice. Life is full of surprises. I pray we all at least become and stay friends as we try to create a better world together.

Black Lives Matter ...

Paul Murano
VALLEY PATRIOT EDITOR'S CHOICE AWARD

As I witnessed a bit of the mayhem of protesting the latest fatal police action within the black community - the rioting, the peaceful marching, and the sitting on the nation's highways - I noticed this sign held by a protester: "Black Lives Matter".

Instead of thinking about whether this particular verbal protestation was fitting in response to the recent police actions, my mind went to a place to which readers of this column would not be at all surprised. It is a place where reason led me, and, as I see it, where reason ought to lead everyone.

As of this writing, since Michal Brown died in Ferguson, Missouri on August 9th, 1062 black babies have been intentionally killed before their birth in Missouri. No riots. No protests. No laying down on highways. That's nine African-American babies each day in Missouri alone, and counting - their lives unjustly taken. Each of those babies was just as valuable as Michael Brown. None of them got the opportunity to live twenty years like Michael did. None of them attacked a police offer, resisted arrest, or broke the law in any way. These black males and females were unjustly killed, not with a gun but an abortion knife and suction machine.

It is legal in this country to kill Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, and Eric Garner - as long as they are still in their mothers' wombs.

According to the CDC, 78% of babies killed by abortion in NYC in the year 2011 were black or hispanic. According to blackgenocide.org, an organization run by African-Americans who truly care about justice, 1,876 black babies on average are aborted every day in the United States. And according to the Alan Guttmacher Institute, black women are more than five times as likely as white women to have an abortion.

In this season of Advent and Christmas we are reminded of the baby Jesus in the manger, the baby who literally changed the world. We recall the humanity of the baby Jesus as an embryo at the Annunciation (Lk 1:34), as a fetus inside His mother Mary inspiring the fetus John the Baptist to leap in his mother's womb (Lk 1:41), and as a helpless infant (Lk 2:7) needing His mother and Joseph to lead Him through the early travails of this life.

Advent is a time to be more aware of our need for a Savior. If our vices and addictions don't do it, and our broken and strained relationships don't do it, then hopefully the following fact will: that each of us will die in a relatively short time and will be answerable for our lives, including why we ignored "the least ones" (Mt) in a society that kills over one-third of all human beings God creates before birth. Unless our society acknowledges a higher power that became a dependent baby, and admits it needs this Savior to overcome its slavery to selfishness, it will not overcome its current addiction to sex that 'demands' such a slaughter of innocents. Countless Michael Browns will continue to die before birth, their lives unjustly taken from them before they have a chance to make choices for themselves. The mainstream media doesn't care because it doesn't fit their narrative. The world of academia will continue to provide dens of inequity called "dorms" and ignore Planned Parenthood targeting minority neighborhoods to make their numerous abortions for money.

The good news is that there is hope. The "happily ever after" that is planted in every human heart is attainable because God lowered Himself to become one of us, to take the hit for us and enable us to be reconciled with God, who is the only way to fulfillment. Merry Christmas to all - no matter your race or ethnicity - and may the embryo, fetus, and infant Jesus bring you great blessings this season in your hope for true happiness and peace.

Paul Murano teaches philosophy at North Shore Community College and Middlesex Community college, hosts "Beneath the Surface" radio on Monday nights 9-11pm, and co-hosts the Paying Attention! radio program with Tom Duggan, both on WCAP 980AM. Paul serves on the board of Heartbeat Pregnancy Help in Burlington, and is a singer/songwriter/musician. Email Paul at PJDM@aol.com.

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SHEILA'S RECIPE CORNER

SHEILA MULLINS
VALLEY PATRIOT RECIPE COLUMNIST

It's December already! WOW! Where did the year go?!

Everyone is pressed this time of the year to entertain, shop, decorate, & so much more. I thought that some easy, quick, feed a crowd, eminently tasty recipes would be great choices.

I had recently cooked a Persian dinner for a client & among the recipes was what, the only word I know how to call it, I would call a frittata. The one featured here is different, but the inspiration for all the herbal ingredients came from the recipe that I made.

This one is fast, easy, & feeds a crowd. It's perfect for a busy cook for a breakfast or a brunch. Additionally, I went to the farmer's market here in Newburyport & tried some incredibly good artisan ricotta cheese. I was hooked! I had to have some. Now you know the inspiration for this month's column.

RICOTTA FRITTATA

5 large eggs, room temperature
½ t salt
½ t pepper
2 T fresh thyme
2.5 T fresh fennel fronds, chopped fine
1/3 c parsley, finely chopped
1/4c chopped onion
1 t lemon zest
¾ c fresh ricotta cheese

Preheat on medium heat a large cast iron skillet with 1.5 T butter.

Into a large bowl, place eggs & ricotta. Whip with a whisk until ricotta is thoroughly incorporated. Add rest of ingredients. Whisk until incorporated. Pour into preheated pan. Cook until almost set, about 10 minutes.

Serves 4. (One can double recipe & cook in the oven. Preheat oven to 350°F & bake about 15-17 minutes).

PUFF PASTRY WITH RICOTTA, TOMATOES, & ONION JAM

1 sheet thawed puff pastry
½ c prepared or homemade onion jam
½ c fresh ricotta
¾ c grape tomatoes*
2 t fresh thyme*
½ t garlic powder*
2 T extra virgin olive oil*
Salt & pepper*

Preheat oven to 400°F. Place tomatoes in an 8" x 8" or 9" x 9" baking pan. Coat with oil, & sprinkle other ingredients over the tomatoes. Place in oven & roast until shriveled, about 16-18 minutes. Set aside.

Cut the puff pastry into 16 pieces & place on a greased baking sheet. Bake until puffed & lightly golden brown, about 10 minutes.

Heat the onion jam in the microwave for about 30 seconds or until fairly warm/hot. Reserve.

Remove puff pastry sheet. Spread about ¾ t ricotta on each square. Top with about ¾-1 t onion jam & top that with 2 tomatoes. Place back in oven for about 3 minutes. Enjoy! Makes 16 piece

* One can substitute ready-made roasted tomatoes & check for seasoning. Season accordingly.

Sheila Mullins is an interior designer & personal cook. She welcomes your feedback, and can be reached at Sheila_A_Mullins@Hotmail.com. All column recipes are developed by Sheila Mullins & tested by Jerry, Sheila, & sometimes friends & family.

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TV TALK WITH BILL CUSHING

My Favorite Christmas TV Episodes

Bill Cushing
VALLEY PATRIOT TV COLUMNIST

With Christmas upon us, I thought I would look back at some great Christmas episodes of our favorite shows over the years. There have been many, to be sure. But I'm going to discuss my personal favorites. Some that are not what you would consider traditional Christmas episodes, and that's why I like them so much.

All In The Family – "Edith's Christmas Story" – This episode of All In The Family dealt with a serious issue. While Christmas descended on the Bunker home, Edith discovered a lump in her breast. She dealt with it secretly, rather than ruining everyone's Christmas. Archie figured out what was happening though, and rushed to the hospital to be by her side while she underwent testing. Things turned out well, as Edith didn't have cancer. The episode showed, that despite Archie's gruff exterior, his love for Edith was always present.

LOST – "The Constant" – In this episode, while aboard a helicopter that experiences turbulence, Desmond's consciousness keeps jumping back and forth through time. He finally was able to reunite with his lost love, Penny, on Christmas. While LOST had many outstanding episodes, The Constant is one of the very best, and one of the series defining moments.

Scrubs – "My Own Personal Jesus" – Scrubs, in my opinion, is one of the great comedies of the 2000's and highly underrated. The main theme of this episode is that it's very hard to get into the Christmas spirit while working at a hospital. Turk tries to convince that the unlikely recovery of a patient is a miracle. JD doesn't believe it. Turk then loses his faith after a particularly rough Christmas Eve in the ER. But by episode's end, Turk finds a missing pregnant woman and he and Elliot help deliver her baby, performing a miracle and restoring Turk's faith. A very funny episode that's very touching at the same time, as most of the episodes of this fine series were.

Happy Days – "Guess Who's Coming To Christmas" – Fonzie is all-alone on Christmas, after telling everyone he had huge plans. When the Cunningham's learn that Fonzie is really spending Christmas by himself, they try to invite him over but he insists that he has plans. They concoct a story that their mechanical Santa needs to be fixed. After making the repairs, Fonzie is finally convinced to stay and join the Cunningham family for Christmas. It's a sweet story that mixes in the nostalgia of the 50's along with the heartwarming Christmas spirit.

The West Wing – "In Excelsis Deo" – Toby is called to the National Mall. A man was found dead and he had Toby's business card on him. Toby had donated his coat to Goodwill and this homeless man was wearing it. Toby discovers that the man was a Korean War veteran and arranges for a military funeral. The episode ends with a very touching montage of a Christmas celebration at the White House, a choir singing The Little Drummer Boy, and the military funeral for the homeless man. TV doesn't get much better than this.

MASH – "Death Takes A Holiday" – On Christmas, BJ and Hawkeye struggle to keep a mortally wounded soldier alive so that his family will not remember Christmas Day as the day they lost their husband and father. Like many MASH episodes, it tugs at your heartstrings while putting everything in perspective.

Seinfeld – "The Strike" – The classic episode that introduced Festivus to the world. Festivus, as George describes to the gang, is a made up holiday that his father invented. Festivus is celebrated around a bare aluminum pole instead of a tree, and an uncomfortable dinner which includes "The Airing of Greivances," where people raise complaints they have. The made up holiday has spawned real life celebrations of Festivus every year and Festivus merchandise. A classic episode from a classic series.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year everyone!

Did I miss your favorite Christmas episode? Do you enjoy my columns? I'd love to hear from you. Do you have any questions about TV? Email me at BillsTVTalk@gmail.com. I will answer all of your questions and will feature some of the questions I receive in a future column.

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Some Patients Pay More and May Not Keep their Doctor

Dr. Frank MacMillan, MD
VALLEY PATRIOT MEDICAL COLUMNIST

While I consider myself well read and I work hard to remain connected to and aware of changes happening in medicine, I have only recently become knowledgeable about a new program being rolled out by CMS (Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services) on January 1, 2015 that may affect a large number of Medicare patients going forward. I also can say that many physicians, and would bet that many patients too, are unaware of this program or how it will actually work.

I first heard about Medicare's Chronic Care Management (CCM) payment program this past September from a colleague who is a very busy primary care physician with a large patient panel, who believes the program can help improve care for people with chronic health problems, but has concerns about the details. A November 27, 2014 New England Journal of Medicine "Perspective" article by Edwards and Landon summarizes the program nicely, but raises serious questions about implementation, which I echo and hope to explain better to you. The new program is rolling out in a matter of weeks, and there has been hardly any communication from CMS to the public on what the program is, how it works, or why it may be valuable. There is also the 20% cost sharing problem, more on that below.

Let me briefly discuss what the new CCM is. Medicare is the Federal Government program that provides health care to those over 65, and the disabled. The person covered under Medicare is responsible for paying 20% of the allowable charge after Medicare pays the first 80%, either by paying cash or through co-insurance. What this CCM program does is make a new payment to doctors for chronic care management which covers the cost of care that does not involve actual face to face time. This is new because traditional Medicare does not cover services where both the patient and medical doctor are not both physically present. Examples include telephone calls, emails, writing letters to other health professionals, prescriptions, filling out forms for employment, etc. The Chronic Care Management fee is intended to cover the cost of providing more active care coordination for Medicare patients with two or more chronic health conditions. Diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease are examples that would meet the definition, and it is estimated that upwards of two thirds of Medicare patients would meet the two or more chronic disease criteria for this program's payment.

The payment for CCM is expected to be $40 per patient per month. If there is no co-insurance coverage, the cost sharing for which the patients are responsible is $96/year, a sizeable amount if you are poor or on a fixed income. The new program requires that patients opt-in yearly with a written consent. How a lack of consent will affect the relationship between the patient and the doctor remains to be seen, especially now that many doctors are employed by hospital systems, and may not have the power to modify or waive payments. I think it's obvious that there is a potential for health care disruption. To participate, a doctor must use a certified electronic health record and have 24/7 access. Not all primary care doctors have an electronic record, and this can be a considerable expense that may not be offset by the CCM payment. There is real concern that this added computer expense would be affordable only to large systems, and drive solo and small groups out of practice or into retirement. There is also no built in way to measure whether there is better quality or value in the program, so it is not beyond imagination that large and well organized systems could be paid for services that haven't been proven to improve care.

While the promise of value- based and better coordinated health care is a laudable policy goal, there is concern that care could be disrupted, and there is no way to audit the outcomes in the program. I have my own concerns on whether decisions people make could put them at cross purposes to their doctor under this program. Patient choice on medications, vaccinations, etc. could be sacrificed on the altar of some bureaucrat's definition of high quality health care. How this program evolves in the real world remains to be seen, but I think it is clear that the train is leaving the station. Stay tuned.

Dr. MacMillan specializes in Gastroenterology and Liver disease and is a member of the North Andover Board of Health. He practices at Holy Family Hospital and currently serves as President of the Massachusetts Gastroenterology Association. Dr. MacMillan was recently reelected as Massachusetts Governor of the American College of Gastroenterology and is a Fellow of the College.

Respect for the Individual Supports all our Rights

Bharani Padmanabhan, MD
VALLEY PATRIOT MEDICAL COLUMNIST

Respect for the individual has and should continue to define the doctor-patient relationship. The minute this is lost, all else is lost as well.

Marketing materials for hospitals tout the words 'compassionate care' and 'Human First!' incessantly. It would be nice if any of this were true given the tremendous push to change the nature of the doctor-patient relationship from one of respect for the individual to algorithmic management of an interchangeable body.

Management types who sold cola cans, hotel beds and airplane seats have moved into medicine and are forcefully making medicine conform to their experience. This push would have failed but for doctors who saw the dollar signs in the air and jumped into this transformation of medicine through rhetorical tautology, a classic example being our very own Dr. Lucian Leape.

Doctors who still respect the individual are denounced as standing in the way of progress, fully unfit for the brave new world of compliance with recommendations from above.

That is a problem in itself given that erasing a doctor's respect for the individual has repeatedly led directly to mass murder.

The other problem is the recommendations from above towards which total compliance is demanded from doctors, on pains of being hounded by the Board of Medicine on behalf of hospitals, are based on what makes money for the management types, all of whom make a minimum of $200,000 per year each, in every hospital in every state across this land.

Doctors are also denounced for not purchasing useless electronic record systems that actually harm patient care while being so expensive; individual doctors are forced to give up their practices and become employees of the management types. It is rhetorical tautology imposed as a Federal executive rule.

Recently, to my pleasant surprise, Pamela Hartzband and Jerome Groopman complained in the NY Times about the utter corruption now underpinning what recommendations patients receive from doctors who have to serve a master different from the patient sitting before them. Even the choice of chemo has to make money for the hospital. They correctly complain about doctors being given bonuses when they meet targets set for them by hospitals and insurers and being punished when they do not. Management types call this system "Pay for Performance" as if doctors perform only when forced to by well-paid management types.

Even worse, the targets are set from on high by folks like Dr. Lucian Leape and his friends that leave no room for individual variations in health and genetic backgrounds. A certain target may well be good for some, but not for all. Forcing that target on those individuals will assuredly harm them. But the doctor will do it now for fear of being denounced as standing in the way of progress. An MS patient of mine was fired last month by her primary doctor for missing two appointments, as it made his numbers look bad. She was ill in bed and called to let him know in advance. His numbers look better now.

Given the silence from the citizenry over this massive change, supporters of Progress in Massachusetts have declared that doctors must register with the government every single patient they prescribe medicines to for anxiety.

There was never a law passed by the Legislature allowing this massive taking by the government, a massive violation of the right that every individual has hitherto possessed to keep her medical information out of the hands of the government.

When Truman nationalized this nation's private steel mills by lying that the nation was in a state of war when it wasn't, he was told strongly that only the Legislature could authorize a taking by the government. Period. Governor Patrick has done one better. He has engineered a clear taking by the Executive branch of government of something even more fundamental.

Be very clear, in Massachusetts, in the name of progress, every single person prescribed a medicine for anxiety shall now be registered with the government.

Be very clear, one does not need to also be a drug addict for this registration to apply.

If you are 19 and in college for the first time and are prescribed a short course of Xanax by the college clinic, you will be registered with the government. Exactly like citizens of East Germany. If you are 66 and recently widowed and prescribed a short course of Valium, you will be registered with the government. Exactly like citizens of East Germany.

Doctors who do not register you with the government will lose their license so you can be sure they will violate your right happily. Given the Legislature and the ACLU's Massachusetts chapter, we're too scared to rescue a 16-year-old kidnap victim, they certainly will not protect your individual rights either.

Progress! Forward!

Bharani Padmanabhan MD PhD is a Board Certified neurologist who specializes in MS in the Boston area. scleroplex@gmail.com

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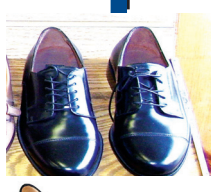

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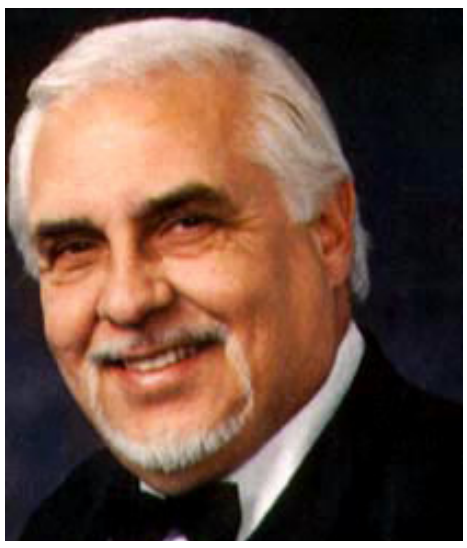

While these words might work, they also might incite and conger up resistance, anger and non-compliance as the subconscious mind could see those words as a challenge and could negate the suggestion. Our subconscious minds will only accept, in most cases, simple and positive suggestions.

My associate hypnotist, Tommy Vee, and I have found better ways to help you to accept and follow the proper suggestions. We share these with you now in hopes of improving your lifestyle in all categories.

Listed below are some of the properly and effectively worded suggestions that just might make a difference in your success ratio. Your suggestions should be in the first person as you repeat the suggestions daily to yourself. The impact of your words is enormous! Therefore, it is extremely important to use the right words and the correct tone of voice that exudes confidence and is pleasingly acceptable by your subconscious mind. This is the mind that never sleeps and works 24 hours a day every day.

If you implant and release the power of CHOICE, it becomes a whole new event for you ... Then, you will not feel deprived of smoking, food etc.

This will motivate you to a higher level of success and a happier life.

Take a look at these dynamic suggestions that Tommy Vee and I have developed over 45 years of experience in the clinical hypnosis field. You might be familiar with some of them but if you come away with a few great ideas, then this article was worth writing for you.

THE SUGGESTIONS BELOW ARE THE ONES THAT YOU WILL SAY OR THINK TO YOURSELF. YOU MIGHT WANT TO WRITE THEM DOWN SO THAT, WHEN YOU READ THEM OUTLOAD, YOU WILL BE USING THE SENSES OF SIGHT AND SOUND……IT IS VERY EFFECTIVE.

THE WORDS: “I DON’T HAVE TO” REMOVES ANY COMPULUSION AND GIVES YOU THE POWER OF CHOICE.

CATEGORY

SMOKING: “I might feel like smoking, but I don’t have to”

“If the thought (use the word thought instead of urge) of smoking crosses your mind, acknowledge it and then tell yourself: “ But I don’t have to.”

“I have the power of CHOICE, and I CHOOSE not to smoke!

“Smoking is poison to my body and I want to live a long and healthy life!”

“I respect and protect my body at all times”

“When I feel good about myself, I can do anything I set me mind to”

“I am getting healthier and healthier everyday”

“Smoking to me is dirty, disgusting, distasteful and very dangerous”

“I feel clean, calm, relaxed and confident everyday”

“I believe in myself and can accomplish any goal I wish to reach”

“The only thing that is important is what I do from this moment on”

“I act, walk, talk, think, look and feel like a happy, healthy non-smoker!”

WEIGHT CONTROL:

“I might feel like overeating, but I don’t have to.”

If the thought of overeating or eating the wrong foods crosses your mind, tell yourself:

“ I don’t have to”

“I have the power of CHOICE and I CHOOSE not to overeat.”

“I eat healthy food and sensible portions everyday.”

“Smaller portions of food actually satisfy me completely”

“I am becoming thinner and lovelier, everyday” (For women)

“I am becoming thinner and stronger everyday” (For men)

“Food is important for health and life, but I am more important”

“I decide what goes into my body and I make great decisions”

“I act, walk, talk, think, look and feel like a person who is losing weight easily and enjoyably”

STRESS CONTROL: “Nothing can bother me without my consent”

“Is this problem within or beyond my control?”

“I will waste no time on problems beyond my control”

“I solve problems within my control

HYPNOSIS: PAGE 31

MORE: FROM PAGE 18

“away” are depriving families and communities of their time and talents.

Fatherhood, family, and faith constitute essential elements of a comprehensive offender program. Corrections-focused fatherhood programs are among the core competencies of the Germantown, Md.-based National Fatherhood Initiative. NFI designs and provides evidence-based programming to correctional facilities and related institutions to promote rehabilitation and reentry. It makes a cost-benefit proposition – that its promise to “address criminogenic needs and support cognitive-behavioral interventions” with fathers saves money and lives.

As reported in The Atlantic, during Dr. Nicole Brown’s Johns Hopkins Hospital residency, she discovered recurring trauma histories in low-income patients who had been diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Now substantiated by a study presented to the Pediatric Academic Societies, “it’s clear that some misbehaving children might be experiencing harm that no stimulant can fix.” Family can be a fix.

The head of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Archbishop Kurtz of Louisville, at beginning of the Conference’s fall general assembly in Baltimore last month, invoked Pope Francis’s framing of the Church as “a place of mercy freely given, where everyone can feel welcomed, loved, forgiven, and encouraged to live the good life of the Gospel” (Catholic News Agency). Mercy and forgiveness are virtues of governmental criminal justice structures, even if given less freely and with less pointed encouragement on the ‘what’s and ‘why’s of a good life.

There are new frontiers for healing. The Pew Research Center found one in five Americans shared their faith online during the 2014 week polled (not Easter week, and it’s not Christmas yet). Whether for celebration, salvation, or more ordinary reaffirmations, there is yearning and opportunity for growth there. Forty percent of people in the same survey shared their personal faith offline in the same week. When you then consider the values and norms undoubtedly shared by those who do not identify as religious at all, we’re just not very private people when it comes to our fundamental beliefs, struggles, and questions. Getting out of other comfort zones and communicating through different media in different forums with different people will, more so than our currency, honor the value of e pluribus unum.

In New Hampshire, there are examples of progress as well. In the North Country, the Tamworth-based Tri-County Community Action Program’s Restorative Justice Center offers, among other things, household mediation—“parents and kids learning new ways to resolve conflict.” CADY (Communities for Alcohol- and Drug-free Youth) accepts Lin-Wood, Newfound, and Pemi-Baker region court diversion referrals as “A Second Chance for First-Time Youth Offenders.” Eligibility depends on “parents who are willing to make an active commitment to the process” of dialogue and amends.

Restorative justice may or may not have been in New Hampshire headlines in the case of a 17-year-old charged with hitting two pedestrians, injured but surviving, while driving under the influence of alcohol and marijuana in Hampton this past summer. WMUR reported “a lawyer for Gross-Santos is asking the court to consider what is known as restorative justice, under which he would apologize to the victims instead of serving jail time.” WMUR’s article further characterized the accused’s attorney, Andrew Cotrupi, as “asking the court to consider a program that has never been used in Rockingham County.” A fairly typical online comment-thread debate ensued. But Cotrupi later told Seacoastonline of his client, “No part of what he’s doing is that [i.e., proposing an apology as the end of legal proceedings]. Everyone sees a nefarious motive in all of that. That’s fine. That’s where we are in the world. You try to immediately apologize and you’re not allowed (by the court), and if you don’t you’re criticized.” There is often a mob mentality to crime and punishment, so police officer, prosecutor, judge, and governor discretion is a challenging power to wield. Overburdened courts also often impose de facto lose-lose gag orders when they don’t host speedy trials.

New Hampshire’s 523-page Law Enforcement Manual, in its fifth edition by the state Attorney General’s Office, includes the word “parent” twice and “father” once. Designed, per its preface, “to directly benefit law enforcement officers as they carry out their patrol and investigatory duties,” the manual is near oblivious to traditional legal and moral authority for minors. Traditional and new social structures and strategies, including expanded “harm reduction,” will save lives and better people. New Hampshire may end the year with double the heroin overdose deaths of last year. Necessity is the mother of invention, and responding to this public emergency will require mothers, fathers, and more.

Is the system broken? “The system” is really a matrix of governments and government agencies, private for-profit and nonprofit organizations, and individuals, families, and kinship networks. That it is a patchwork is more of a blessing than a bane. Positively, it means that government structural improvements, supplements, and innovations are possible in a variety of manifests. “Changing the culture” is not only possible, it is a constant. Change is always happening, even when it feels like hope has waned. There are so many moving parts and people to society that there isn’t much that’s productive about describing or decrying a general status quo. Instead, private citizens and public officials ought to 1) celebrate local victories and heroes, 2) propose simple, popular, common-sense win-wins when they present themselves, 3) research and develop cost-effective, evidence-based solutions, and 4) pick good fights to fight to educate young change-agents-to-be, embolden existing silent majorities, and model loving justice for anyone who might be watching.

Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr. is senior counsel in King & Spalding’s Government Advocacy and Public Policy practice group. He served as Governor of Maryland from 2003-2007 and previously in Congress and the Maryland General Assembly. Alex Talcott is a Faculty Team Lead for Criminal Justice at Southern New Hampshire University, where he also teaches business law.

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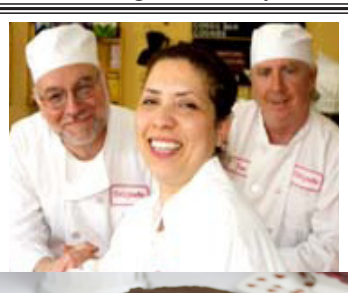

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NOTEBOOK: FROM 9

felon Lenny Degnan (see BOZO of the YEAR at the top of this page) a number of prominent people came forward for the Lantigua crone, writing letters to the judge asking for leniency. Among those who tried to influence the judge for mercy were: North Andover Town Moderator Mark DiSalvo, North Andover Selectman Richard Vaillancourt, former North Andover School Committeeman Bill Kelley, former Lawrence Mayor Mary Claire Kennedy, her former Chief of Staff Jack McCarthy, former Lawrence City Councilor and worker for the Secretary of State's Office Joe Quartarone, Former Lawrence Police Chief Robert Hayden, Lawrence Building Inspector Peter Blanchette (who is the brother of Patrick Blanchette), community activist Brian DePina, and others. Degnan was given 14 months and is still in prison.

HEROES - SEN. KATY IVES, REP. DIANA DIZOGLIO

They were smeared, they were lied about, they had their signs stolen, they were called unethical, dishonest, untrustworthy, and when they tried to defend themselves they were called liars. But, State Senator Katy Ives and State Rep. Diana DiZoglio, (both Democrats), stayed above the fray and never got down in the gutter with their opponents. In short, they kept it classy and the voters rewarded them both with their first re-election win.

SIDENOTE: LAWRENCE – Well the 2014 state and national elections are barely a memory and those on the local level are already lining up to run for office in November 2015 election. In Lawrence, School Committeeman Jim Blatchford is running for City Council, At-Large. School Committeeman Myra Ortiz is running for District "A" City Council, a seat currently held by our friend Sandy Almonte. All nine members of the Lawrence City Council, and all six members of the powerless Lawrence School Committee are on the ballot in 2015. This will create an immediate opening in Districts F and C on the School Committee.

CALENDAR

METHUEN - Merrimack Valley Prevention and Substance Abuse Project Community Meeting: come on down and help make a difference. December 18th at the Methuen Senior Center, 77 Lowell St. Methuen. MISSION: Engage public and private community members to work together promoting awareness, education, prevention and treatment of substance use in our communities. VISION: Promoting health and wellness in our communities by increasing awareness and the value of community involvement that promotes education, prevention and treatment for substance abuse.

For More Information, Contact: Phil Lahey: Lahey2000@verizon.net or Jennifer A. Burns: createpeace143@gmail.com

HAVERHILL - Mayor Fiorentini had kits of Narcan installed in police cars, and fire trucks will be next. Narcan is a drug that reverses the effects of heroin and can potentially save the lives of individuals that have overdosed on opiates; it is an antagonist to treat overdoses. The Haverhill Police Department has been trained on the use of Narcan, and the Haverhill Fire Department will be trained shortly. The Narcan in the cruisers is a nasal dose. Haverhill has seen an increase in heroin overdoses, and this drug is a potential lifesaver. The city received $22,000 in grant money from the state to fund the Narcan and Narcan training. "By having our first responders equipped with Narcan, we can attempt to save the lives of individuals that have overdosed. We have a Drug Task Force that will work to address drug activity in our city and in our schools. I want to thank Representative Dempsey for his funding support," the mayor said.

READING, AUSTIN PREP. – The Academic Decathlon team at Austin Preparatory School in Reading received the Small Schools Division First Place trophy in the regional competition.

The school finished with a total of 21,189 points, beating out 14 other schools in the Small Schools Division. The nine-person team competed in seven events, earning 22 medals individually, and placed second in the overall competition. The theme for this year is New Alternatives in Energy: Ingenuity and Innovation.

Small Schools Division medals are awarded to the top three finishers (including ties) in each subject in each of three categories determined by student grade point average. The highest category is Honors, followed by Scholastic and then Varsity.

The team includes: Senior John Smolak of North Andover (Varsity): Gold for Social Science, Language and Economics; Silver for Science and Music; Bronze for Art; Silver for Overall Performance among Varsity students

LOWELL - THE FIRST BOOK SIGNING of MOONLIGHT MONTECRISTO

Mark your calendars. Saturday, December 13th from 2-4pm. Athenian Corner - 207 Market Street, Lowell, MA 01852. John MacDonald, author of *Moonlight Montecristo* announces his first book signing. Saturday December 13th at the Athenian Corner in Lowell, MA. The new thriller, *Moonlight Montecristo* is available as an e-book and has just been released on paperback. Available on Amazon, Barnes and Noble, Author House, ITunes and other Ebook retailers. Order your copy today!

Copies of *Moonlight Montecristo* will be available for purchase on December 13th and will be a great holiday gift! Feel free to bring previously purchased copies for signing.

READING, AUSTIN PREP HONORS

The following students have made the first-quarter honor roll at Austin Preparatory School in Reading.

Dracut - HONORS: Alexis Nichols, Austin Nichols, Rebecca Lowe.

Haverhill - HONORS: Alexander Gilmore, Laura Rosado.

Lawrence - HONORS: Ashley Moore, Nicole Bautista, Tuong Thai.

Methuen - HONORS: Adriana Farias, Catherine Flagg, Eric Naish, Maria Luccisano.

North Andover - DISTINCTION: Emily Mastrocola, Michael Kamelle, Molly O'Leary.

HONORS: Alessandra Petrozza, Anna Schiff, Christopher Applegate, Elizabeth Boucher, Jacob Norris, Madison Rieumont, Max Rieumont, Megan Mahan, Melissa Saindon, Michael Roche, Olivia Zdrojewski, Salina Nihalani, Sarah Schaller, Shuruthe Raju, Stanley Alger

SUPERPACS SPEND $25.3M on GOVERNORS RACE IN MA

From OCPF: Spending by outside groups and Independent Expenditure "Super" PACs to support or oppose gubernatorial party finalists was twice the total spent by the candidates themselves.

Outside groups reported making $16.9 million in independent expenditures to support or oppose the finalists, Charles Baker and Martha Coakley. The candidates reported $8,406,864 in expenditures during the election cycle (Jan. 1, 2013 - Nov. 15, 2014).

Combined, spending by outside groups and the campaigns totaled $25.3 million, and does not include in-kind contributions by state party committees, which will be dis-closed by candidates in January.

Independent expenditures are made by Super PACs and other groups to support or oppose a candidate, but without coordinating with candidates and their campaigns. Super PACs accounted for $9.9 million in spending to support Baker, a Republican, or to oppose Coakley, a Democrat. Super PACs and other groups reported spending $6.9 million to support Coakley and oppose Baker.

Most IEPAC spending was done by two committees – Commonwealth Future, which benefited Baker, and Mass IEPAC, which benefited Coakley.

Commonwealth Future reported the highest spending total, $9.3 million to support Baker and oppose Coakley. The committee was funded primarily by the Republican Governors Association, which contributed $9,400,000.

Mass IEPAC reported $6.3 million in expenditures to support Coakley and oppose Baker. The primary donors to the committee were the Massachusetts Teachers Association IEPAC ($2,539,355), the Democratic Governors Association ($1,394,000), and WOMEN VOTE! ($1,150,000).

Baker led all gubernatorial candidates in spending with $4,575,157, followed by Coakley at $3,831,707. Three other unenrolled candidates appeared on the ballot — Evan Fal-chuk ($2.4 million); Jeffrey McCormick ($1.5 million); and Scott Lively ($29,491).

Baker's spending total was less than all other successful gubernatorial candidates since 1998:

- 2010 Deval Patrick $5.4 million
- 2006 Deval Patrick $8.9 million
- 2002 Mitt Romney $9.4 million
- 1998 Paul Cellucci $7 million

Former Gov. William Weld spent $4 million in 1994.

Super PACs and other groups also made expenditures to support or oppose other statewide and legislative candidates. Complete studies on independent spending and statewide candidate activity will be issued by OCPF at future dates. Super PACs originated in 2010 after two court decisions. In the Supreme Court's Citizens United vs. FEC decision, the court ruled that independent expenditures by corporations that are made to influence candidate elections cannot be limited, because doing so would not be consistent with the First Amendment. The second court decision, SpeechNow.org vs. FEC, held that individuals, corporations, and other groups can provide funds without limit to independent expenditure-only committees (Super PACs). This decision was made by the U.S. Court of Appeals in D.C.

NORTH ANDOVER ROOTING FOR THE CANNS

F.H. Cann & Associates (FHC), a woman-owned business based in North Andover, Massachusetts, is proud to announce its selection as a small business collection contractor for the US Department of Education. In a long and extremely competitive process, FHC was awarded the US Department of Education contract based upon its significant experience in default collections, superior performance, outstanding customer service and strong compliance and security. Frank Cann, President and CEO, stated "we are thrilled to win this award which is considered to be the pinnacle of contracts within defaulted student loan collections". He went on to say "we invest in people and technology and deliver unparalleled service and responsiveness to our clients and their customers. This is truly a testament to the hard work of our entire staff".

While a national leader in education collections and partnering with some of the largest FFELP guaranty agencies in the U.S., FHC also delivers strong results working with many prestigious clients in Financial Institutions, Commercial Businesses, State and Local Governments, and Schools; as well as provides Default Aversion Services. FHC takes a tailored approach to each client and employs recovery specialists in each business discipline.

F.H. Cann is proud to have been named one of the 2014 Best Places to Work in Collections by insideARM. A distinction they have held each year since 2011.

MASS FISCAL ALLIANCE URGES LAWMAKERS TO REJECT PAY HIKE

The Massachusetts Fiscal Alliance, a nonpartisan, nonprofit advocacy group dedicated to promoting better government and right-of-center fiscal and economic policy solutions, today called upon lawmakers not to act on proposals made by a commission that recommended large salary increases for a wide range of state elected officials.

"Simply put, passing the commission's proposals would send the wrong message at the wrong time," stated Paul Craney, the group's executive director. "With tens of millions of dollars in cuts to local aid and other programs being proposed to close a gaping hole in the state's budget, enormous pay increases for politicians are a completely inappropriate use of taxpayer money."

Among its other recommendations, the commission proposed to increase the governor's salary to $185,000 and provide a $65,000 annual housing stipend as well. Under the plan, the speaker of the state house and senate president would see 72% pay raises to $175,000 a year, with smaller percentage raises to boost the attorney general and state treasurer's salaries to the same level. Rank-and-file lawmakers would receive larger expense allowances based on the distance from their districts to Boston, although the commission also suggested ended the so-called "per diem" payments that have criticized as an accountability-free way of paying lawmakers to drive to work. Furthermore, if the proposals are passed before the end of 2014, all re-elected lawmakers would essentially be voting for their own raises without having to face the voters, a clear conflict of interest.

"We certainly applaud the commission for joining the call to end per diem payments. That said, Beacon Hill politicians should use common sense and not vote to give themselves a raise paid for with money that could be better spent fulfilling the broken promises of local aid. Craney concluded.

METHUEN RANKED AS #4 MA COMMUNITY ON THE RISE

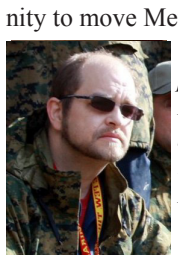
NerdWallet researched 61 cities in Massachusetts with more than 20,000 residents for growth in jobs, income and population. The numbers, based on 2009-2012 data, show Methuen ranked #4 in growth for communities in the Commonwealth.

These numbers show that Methuen has increased its population by 10.9% and its income level by 4.3%. At the same time, the number of employed residents in Methuen fell by just 1.3%. The report is another example of Methuen's ever-improving financial standing.

In July of 2014, Methuen achieved an AA/Stable Bond Rating by Standard & Poor's Ratings Services, the highest rating in the city's history. Methuen was also assigned an SP+ rating on the outstanding Bond Anticipation Note of $20 million that will be rolled over until the next fiscal year. In addition, the city issued an underlying rating of AA-/Stable Rating.

NerdWallet (NerdWallet.com) is a popular financial outlet that creates user-friendly tools across banking, credit cards, education, health care, insurance, and investments. In February of 2014, NerdWallet rated Methuen as the 9th best Massachusetts community for homeownership. Their report boasted Methuen's 72.3 % homeownership and affordable homeowner costs which take up just 36.2 %t of the median monthly household income.

The report also lauded Methuen's civic pride, Mayor Zanni's Artist of the Month Program, and our many boards and commissions, which give citizens an opportunity to move Methuen forward.



Tom Duggan is the publisher of The Valley Patriot, a former Lawrence School Committeeman, and hosts the Paying Attention! Radio Program on WCAP, 980AM, every Saturday from 10am-noon. You can email your comments to valleypatriot@aol.com .

SALISBURY FROM PAGE 19

in betterment fees, I was always under the impression that the number of units was always in the 2,000 range. Unfortunately, with the Town of Salisbury, when it comes to revealing true and accurate data, it is difficult to obtain."

MORE COME FORWARD ON SALISBURY'S HIDDEN COSTS

The Tomasellis have long complained that the Town of Salisbury voted for an $18M sewer project in 1982, but did not record the vote with the Registry of Deeds to create a lien. Anyone who owned property in the project area in 1982 (when the town voted in the sewer project) would have to pay the betterment fees. Anyone who bought property after that date would legally not be responsible for any cost for this sewer project. Yet, Salisbury residents in the project area who purchased their property between 1982 and the present were charged for the betterment.

Salisbury resident Brendan Lundy says that when he complained to the Town of Salisbury about the sewer betterment, he was told "This is how it is done here."

Lundy bought his house in 2009 on Brissette Avenue. He says that the title search at the Registry of Deeds had no liens when he bought the property. Lundy said he had no idea of the "hidden costs".

He also says he did not know about any grants the town received at the time. Lundy says he was told he had to pay the betterment and he paid it in full rather than fight the town.

He said his house was bank owned but if the lien would have been recorded, his mortgage company would have made sure the lien was paid before they would let him buy the property.

"How did they get away with this for 20 years?"

Lundy's street was not reconstructed for the new sewer system and has had the original sewer since approximately the 1940s. He says he found out about the betterment charge in his second tax bill he estimates was around March of 2010.

Nicole Stevens of Railroad Avenue says the sewer was not reconstructed on her street and also has the original sewer from the 1940s. Nicole Stevens says she paid the betterment even though she bought the house in 1996. Like Lundy, Tomaselli and so many others, Stevens says she did not know about the betterment charge prior to the closing on her property because there was no lien at the Registry of Deeds.

Stevens says that when she went to the closing she was told for the first time about a betterment, and that she had to pay it annually on her tax bill until it was paid up or she could not buy the house.

"I'm very upset but I agreed to this new condition because I had so much time invested and by that time, I just wanted the house."

Stevens says she is so angry she is trying to get a group of Salisbury rate and tax payers to band together to see this through and investigate what can be done about the illegal fees the town has and is charging it's residents.

EPA WEIGHS IN

The US Environmental Protection Agency has produced a letter validating the claims of the Tomasellis that May 17, 1982 was the date of the vote for the sewer project that the state and federal government paid for. The letter was dated November 12, 2014.

The letter states: Based on the documentation in our files, the Town voted to approve the construction of the wastewater treatment plant and sewer interceptor project at the annual Town meeting on May 17, 1982 (Article #28)."

"The town has been using March 16, 1992 date as the sewer assessment order causing us to lose in court. They lied. But the EPA clearly says it was the 1982 date," Joyce Tomaselli said.

"What we need is for people to come forward so we can start talking about a ten taxpayer lawsuit or a class action lawsuit against the town," said Gracemarie Tomaselli.

"The more people who paid this fake betterment who come forward, the better it will be for everyone. Even today we still don't know what the town does with our money. Are we being charged the right water fees? Sewer user fees? We know we are not charged the right sewer user fees and Tom Saab has been right on point all along that the sewer user fees had to be charged by the users' actual water usage."

"You know, the town officials can say whatever they want to cover this up but the whole town can't be wrong. It's not just us. What we need is people to come forward. There is strength in numbers."

VALLEY: FROM PAGE 29

and remain calm and relaxed"

"I no longer sweat the small things"

"I feel good about myself and nothing can bother me without my consent"

"I am developing a more positive attitude everyday"

"I take the focus off myself and do something nice for a loved one"

"I act, walk, talk, think, look and feel calm, relaxed and confident"

"All unpleasant things from the past are now UNIMPORTANT to me"

"All that matters is what I think and do from this moment on"

As NGH Certified Consulting Hypnotists, our clients expect us to be professional and to know what we are doing. They trust us to take good care of them and to never violate them in any way. With that being said, let's consider the power we have to actually, with words and/or phrases, cause a client to feel: anger, happiness, sadness, fear, elation, motivation, sensual, action (getting started), loneliness and perhaps even more. You should know that the subconscious mind is very literal and accepts and reacts to the stimulus of words, phrases, non-verbal innuendos and does not analyze. Therefore, your suggestions that get accepted into the subconscious mind, are carry with them tremendous power and can manifest all kinds of reactions.

What you say and think to yourself, and how you say it, is extremely potent. For example, I remember one of my new associates working with a client for weight-control, once actually said "You will not eat anymore," instead of "You will not overeat anymore." Now, it is possible that that client could have stopped eating for several days. Is that far-fetched? Not really. Remember the words of the great pioneer, Harry Arons, who said "THE ONLY THING THAT YOU CAN BE SURE OF IN HYPNOSIS, IS THAT YOU CAN'T BE SURE OF ANYTHING!" You never really know if and how a client receives and acts upon a suggestion. So, be very careful of your selection of words and phrases.

I also suggest to my clients that they read "Your Erroneous Zones" by Dr. Wayne Dyer.

Actually, I buy his books and then sell them to my clients at cost. I only have them in the office as a convenience for my clients. This book will teach them how to make the past unimportant and to stay in the present time. It changes their think as you will also change their thoughts.

Our programs are based on the premise that "We become what we think about" and that we "Move towards our dominant thought."

THIS IS ONE OF THE BEST PREMISES THAT REALLY WORKS. "WHEN I FEEL GOOD ABOUT MYSELF, I CAN DO ANYTHING I SET MY MIND TO."

YOU NEED TO SEE IT IN YOUR MIND'S EYE, BELIEVE IT IN YOUR HEART, THEN WATCH IT HAPPEN.

I hope that you will utilize some of our ideas as presented here and, hopefully, see an increase in your helping your clients become successful.

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